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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 974th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

28 November 2013

**In response to the report by the OSCE Representative on
Freedom of the Media**

Mr. Chairperson,

We thank Ms. Dunja Mijatović for her informative report on the work of her Office over the past six months and its future plans.

We note that, according to our observations, the Representative on Freedom of the Media endeavours to take a generally balanced approach to the fulfilment of her existing mandate, which covers the entire OSCE region. However, this is not evident from the report that has been distributed. Attention continues to be focused on the situation regarding freedom of the media and freedom of expression in the countries to the east of Vienna and in the Balkans. We do not share the view that this is simply due to cases involving the violation of the aforementioned freedoms in specific countries. In our opinion, the worrying situation regarding pressure on the media and the journalistic community against the backdrop of cases of systematic violation of privacy by certain OSCE countries deserves no less serious consideration by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. We were astonished by the fact that just yesterday an interview on CNN with the Russian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Mr. Vitaly Churkin, regarding the Syrian problem was censored. We would ask Ms. Mijatović to bring this to her Office's attention.

The Office of the Representative also has some leeway in terms of rectifying thematic imbalances. In particular, this concerns combating hate speech in the media and improving the professionalism and responsibility of journalists. We are obliged to point out that there is no mention whatsoever in the existing OSCE commitments of decriminalization of defamation. The Representative on Freedom of the Media, however, regards this topic as one of the priorities of her practical work.

The OSCE is an organization operating on the basis of consensus-based decisions. For that reason, the Organization's executive structures should adhere strictly to their mandates and operate within the framework of existing commitments, regardless of whether these activities are carried out under the Unified Budget or financed using extrabudgetary sources.

We believe that the OSCE participating States should give serious consideration to the consequences of the change in the present-day media environment associated with the appearance of new information and communication technologies (ICTs). We should try to find common approaches to the new tasks brought about by the use of ICTs for the dissemination of information, and ensure that these new realities are reflected in the mandate of the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

The Russian Federation is committed to the implementation of its OSCE obligations as well as other international obligations concerning freedom of expression. The Russian media landscape consists of almost 70,000 print media and 20,000 electronic publications, along with some 1,500 news agencies. Furthermore, there is State or municipal involvement in only nine per cent of the registered media. It is gratifying that simplified registration and licensing procedures have led to an increase in the number of licences issued, with maximum growth seen among electronic media. Our country is regarded as one of the European leaders when it comes to the number of Internet users.

Certainly, all of us are striving towards pluralism in electronic media, including information posted on the Internet. However, while ensuring the greatest possible freedom in obtaining and disseminating information, it is necessary to prevent the World Wide Web from being used by criminal elements for the dissemination of pornography, including child pornography, for trafficking in human beings, terrorist and extremist propaganda or other unlawful acts.

We cannot agree with the focus on absolute freedom of the media and freedom of expression, without taking into account the interests and rights of other citizens. The attempts to single out journalists as some kind of untouchable group are also somewhat discriminatory. Of course, all cases of harassment and attacks on journalists connected with the lawful exercise of their professional activities should be roundly condemned and investigated and should receive particular attention from the authorities. However, in granting journalists additional measures of protection compared to ordinary citizens, we have a right to also expect from them a responsible and professional attitude to carrying out their work and respect for the rights and freedoms of other citizens. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights clearly specifies the conditions under which freedoms may be restricted.

We trust that the Representative on Freedom of the Media will bear our comments in mind and will base her work within the framework of her approved mandate on the principles of impartiality, objectiveness and transparency. It is important, Ms. Mijatović, that your Office continue to engage in constructive co-operation with States on the basis of their requests and wishes. Russia is ready for such collaboration.

Thank you for your attention.