



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Sixteenth World Press Freedom Day

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 4, 2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think it is important that we say at least so much to May 3, which was World Press Freedom Day. We, the participating States of the OSCE, have much to reflect on this day. Together with our Representative of Freedom of the Media Miklos Haraszti, we have worked hard to ensure that throughout our region all OSCE countries meet their essential commitments to freedom of the press.

We would like to hail the courageous sacrifices made by journalists around the world to report the facts, even at the cost of their lives and their freedom. Every day brave men and women risk harassment, beatings, detention, imprisonment and even death simply for seeking to share the truth with others around the world. We have to admit that our region has not been exempt from these problems. In other frontiers of press freedom, we have witnessed: tightening of libel laws, a concentration of media ownership, restricted Internet search engines and diminishing independent press outlets

In one major OSCE country, the government continues to weaken media independence, particularly of the major television networks. In others, journalists critical of the regime have been jailed or have simply disappeared, and the governments continue to harass the few remaining independent newspapers. Media outlets have been closed and newspapers seized even in a country that aspires to lead our Organization as Chairman-in-Office. These are only a few examples of violation of media freedom in the OSCE region.

While the United States will continue working to advocate for greater global press freedom, all free societies carry the responsibility to press restrictive governments to allow an open press. Independent media empowers people, it exposes corruption, it encourages transparency and it prompts participation in the political process. Without it, society as a whole suffers. The citizens must have the ability to express themselves, to debate alternative ideas and to challenge assumptions. A media that is independent from the state allows the peaceful expression and competition of ideas, on which democracy depends.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.