



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON
THE WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

Delivered by Ambassador Anne- Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 6 May 2021

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you.

I give this statement on behalf of Andorra, Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, San Marino, Switzerland, and my own country Norway.

Mdm Chair,

The observance of the World Press Freedom Day serves as a reminder to participating States of the need to respect our commitment to media freedom. Access to reliable news and information is a public good. It is also a precondition for good crisis management, as we have seen throughout the ongoing pandemic, and thus it is a precondition for security. Yet journalists are at risk across our region, and media freedom is deteriorating.

In the OSCE region media freedom is challenged by, threats to the safety of journalists, legislation restricting media freedom, lack of trust in the media, and financial and political dependence of media organizations.

Thirteen of our participating States figure among the bottom half and as many as eight among the bottom thirty on this year's World Press Freedom Index. We are witnessing an increase in attacks on journalists in non-conflict areas. Repressive legislation is creating hostile environments for reporting. An attack on a journalist is an attack on us all. It cannot be tolerated.

Women journalists are especially targeted by online violence and fall victims of increasingly vicious attacks. Designed to silence and induce fear, online violence against women includes sexist harassment, threats of sexual violence and murder, racism and other forms of discrimination and hate speech. Moreover, online violence is also now moving offline – sometimes with deadly consequences.

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Mdm. Chair,

There is a difference between information and other kinds of communications content such as disinformation, hate speech, entertainment, and data. Information, that is reliable and verifiable, is a public good. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen how disinformation often travels faster than facts. Quality journalism is the vaccine against disinformation.

Journalists have a distinct and critical role in investigating, collecting, and presenting verified and reliable information. But this is only one part of a broader set of shared responsibility; States, multilateral organisations, private actors, social media platforms and their owners, civil society organisations and other stakeholders, constitute the wider ecosystem necessary to secure free media and equal access to information and to safeguard and protect information as a public good.

Our societies cannot flourish when the right to freedom of expression is under threat. Protecting journalists means protecting access to information and the right to freedom of expression. Critical journalism and a free and open exchange of knowledge and views are crucial for the protection of human rights and democratic values. We encourage participating States to honor their OSCE commitments to safety of journalists and protection of media freedom. We are prepared to do our utmost to ensure a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers both online and offline.

Thank you