

Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting  
Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Media  
With a Special Focus on conflict Situations,  
Including Protection of Journalists and Reporting During Armed Conflict

ENGLISH only

27-28 October 2016

Opening Statement, Armenia

Mr. Moderator,

We would like to thank the OSCE German Chairmanship and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media for organizing the second Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting. Our thanks go to the distinguished introducers for their insightful remarks.

Freedom of expression is not merely one of fundamental freedoms. It is unalienable right, which is one of the cornerstones of democracy and protection of human rights. Moreover, in the absence of freedom of expression, there cannot be tolerance and non-discrimination.

We welcome focus of the SHDM on the freedom of expression and freedom of media throughout conflict cycle. In times of conflicts and crises freedom of expression and activities of media, free from reprisals, harassment and violence are important preconditions for countering propaganda of war, hatred, identity based hate crimes and crimes against humanity.

The OSCE area faces a number of challenges in this regard. The participating States, where freedom of expression is restricted under the pretext of protection of national security and countering terrorism, turn media into a tool for inciting hatred, portraying external enemy and dehumanizing whole nations. For the same reasons there are attempts to restrict access of international media to the conflict areas, through introduction of “black lists”, intimidation and criminal charges against journalists, in order to foster situation conducive for propaganda. Unlawful restriction of freedom of media and incitement of hatred on ethnic and religious grounds leads to radicalization of society, in particular youth, which is more prone to propaganda. The above challenges pose serious security risks, including possible restoration of military phase of conflicts.

Independent and free media can play positive role in times of conflict through providing comprehensive and objective information from conflict areas, countering negative stereotyping, combating impunity of hate crime perpetrators, advocating peace, confidence and reconciliation.

There is a wide field of work for the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in promoting freedom of media and expression throughout all phases of conflict cycle, promoting safety of journalists and their rights to receive and impart information

regardless of frontiers, combating impunity against those, who try to silence voices of journalists and community leaders through their harassment, imprisonment and murder, and supporting confidence building between journalists from conflict affected parties.

Armenia is committed to the protection of journalists in times of conflict and bringing all those who attack or impede the work of journalists to justice.

Thank you.