

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Permanent Council N°1092
Vienna, 10 March 2016**

**EU Statement in Response to the Representative on
Freedom of the Media, Ms Dunja Mijatovic**

The European Union welcomes Ms Dunja Mijatovic back to the Permanent Council. We thank her for her detailed report.

Comprehensive security is the basis of our organisation and rests on the assertion that there can be no security among states without full respect for human rights and democratic principles. When OSCE participating States established the position of a Representative on Freedom of the Media in 1997, we reaffirmed that that free expression and free media are cornerstones of our common security, and recognized that further instruments were needed to safeguard them. The Representative on Freedom of the Media has been, and remains, a vital instrument for the promotion of these fundamental principles and for protecting against their erosion.

Dear Dunja, over the last six years, this important mandate has been discharged with exemplary professionalism, integrity and impartiality by you. You have been a dedicated and tireless advocate for the principles and values that participating States have committed themselves to, but moreover a champion for the rights and security of the citizens of the OSCE region – be they journalists, social media users, or individuals seeking to engage in a free and open exchange of information and ideas – who these principles are intended to protect. We cannot thank you enough for your unwavering commitment and the contribution you have made.

Since you took office in 2010, the challenges in our region have increased. Nevertheless, throughout that time you have not shied away from directly, and at times courageously, raising worrying developments in our region, wherever and whenever they have occurred without distinction. Repeatedly you have stood up for the principle that security and human rights are not concepts to balance against one

another, but are two sides of the same coin. When critical voices have been persecuted as “extremists”, when anti-terrorism laws and practices have undermined free expression, and when media has been unduly restricted in the name of national security or public morals, we have been able to rely on you to speak in defence of free media and free expression, both online and offline.

Today you have once again addressed all of us frankly and directly on the challenges that currently confront media freedom across the OSCE region, and the steps that need to be taken to address them. This is precisely what the participating States have mandated the RFoM to do and in turn we have all committed to engage fully with the Representative in response. As the European Union this is something we have sought to do and we have benefited immensely from the advice we have received.

We have studied your recent report carefully and also share many of the concerns you have raised in other parts of the OSCE region. In recent months we have echoed your statements on developments in Turkey and Azerbaijan, and we continue to follow closely the systemic violations of our freedom of expression commitments in the Russian Federation. In relation to yesterday’s attack on a group of Russian and international journalists and civil society representatives on the border between Ingushetia and Chechnya, we call for a swift and thorough investigation and for all those responsible to be brought to justice. We remain concerned about developments in Kazakhstan and other countries in Central Asia. Your numerous statements, letters, visits, communiqués and advice have provided guidance for reform efforts in Ukraine and the Balkans, and have reminded all participating States of our joint commitments.

Conflict and crisis in the OSCE region have characterised the last years of your tenure. Your fearless work on media in times of conflict has shown the importance of having a strong OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. The visit you undertook to Crimea two years ago, days before the illegal annexation of the peninsula by the Russian Federation, exemplified the courage and engagement that have been an integral part of your service. It also demonstrated the ability of the RFoM to respond rapidly to emerging threats and challenges, thus fulfilling the

Office's important function as an early warning mechanism. Similarly, your pioneering work on the challenge of modern state fuelled propaganda provided the international community, journalists and citizens alike with an early warning of the re-emerging threat of propaganda as well as comprehensive recommendations for effective responses. The organisation of joint meetings of Russian and Ukrainian journalists' unions is another testimony of your successful engagement in times of conflict. Your focus on the safety of journalists, including female journalists, and on open journalism are other examples of how you have been at the forefront of the issues that affect our region. Your involvement in encouraging the release of Ukrainian journalist Maria Varfolomeyeva, held by Russia-backed separatists in the Luhansk area, is another testimony of your successful engagement. In the same vein, we welcome the recently published recommendations on the rights and safety of members of the media reporting on refugees.

Dear Dunja, your outstanding work as our RFoM has earned you great respect far beyond the Hofburg. Through your professional and even handed approach, you have won friends in some of the most difficult places, where your advice has been, and continues to be, direly needed.

We deeply deplore that, in spite of a transparent and inclusive selection procedure, no consensus has been reached yet on nominating a successor. We support the Chairmanship in their efforts to find consensus for a PC decision on a meaningful prolongation, and thank you for your declared readiness, in principle, to step in to ensure the continuity of the institution.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country ICELAND, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE and the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.