



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
The Representative on Freedom of the Media
Dunja Mijatović**

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**Regular Report to the Permanent Council
for the period from 28 November 2013 through 18 June 2014**

Introduction

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose. (The more things change, the more they stay the same).

When Frenchman Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr penned this epigram in 1849, he no doubt had in mind some of the typical madness displayed by mankind as it keeps repeating the mistakes of the past. Dressed up differently, perhaps, but, in reality, the same evil result being played out time and time again.

I think you will all agree that from the end of November last year, which was my last official report to you, what we have seen being played out in the OSCE region is just more of the same thing.

Please consider these facts:

During this reporting period I have intervened on media-freedom related matters about 120 times, including 40 on Ukraine issues alone.

Over the past six months I have come here several times to explain what is happening with freedom of the media in Ukraine and to ask for all the parties involved to show some degree of restraint and respect for the fundamental values of free expression that make democracy and civilized society work.

The problems fall into four broad categories: violence and threats of violence against journalists, the blocking and switching of broadcast signals, the denial of free passage to journalists to cover events, and, of course, the use of propaganda in times of conflict.

The scope of these problems has been so massive that I found it necessary to issue statements, which I call communiques, on several of these issues to make my Office's position absolutely clear. I consider my positions on these issues to be in line with international and OSCE standards on free media and free expression.

I will briefly spell out my views.

At the end of the day, there's no more effective way to restrict free media, free expression and the free flow of information than resorting to physical and emotional violence and threats

of violence against members of the media. And since the beginning of the Maidan demonstrations there figuratively has been a tide of violence perpetrated on members of the media.

Vesti journalist Vyacheslav Veremyi was killed in February. Italian photojournalist Andrea Rocchelli and his Russian assistant, Andrey Mironov, were killed in May. And on Tuesday Russian journalists Igor Kornelyuk and Anton Voloshin were also killed. Literally hundreds have been beaten and hospitalized. Equipment has been destroyed or confiscated at gunpoint.

Creating an environment for free expression is not easy when governments make it more difficult for journalists to report. The denial of entry to journalists based on a perceived bias by government officials is wrong – and runs counter to the express language of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 which recognized the need for the authorities to facilitate international travel by media.

The use of propaganda in times of conflict has the effect of nothing less than throwing gasoline on an open flame. And, in my view, the behaviour of state-owned and state-controlled media in the conflict has been exceptionally reprehensible.

What can be done? Apparently calling on the “better nature” of those involved will not work. They continue to broadcast every day.

It leads us to making sure that there are several voices that can be heard and that there is more, not less information to work with. That, and an informed, media-literate population, that can make rational and not emotional choices may dampen the flames that the propagandists spew.

Let's be honest with each other.

Electronic media – including television and radio – and, to a certain extent, social media – is the great shaper of public opinion. It is no wonder then that we have seen an unprecedented number of armed, hostile takeovers of broadcast facilities to switch off or change broadcast programs. And it is equally not surprising we are seeing attempts by regulators to block or switch programming from that produced in one state to programming from another.

The advocates and fighters in the conflict understand the role electronic media play and they are going to great lengths to make sure that their voice is the only voice being heard.

My Office has engaged in the problems, as observers and facilitators. Last month I invited leaders from Russian and Ukrainian journalists' associations to sit down at a roundtable to debate and discuss the life-and-death issues they face. They agreed to a memorandum of understanding committing themselves to, among other things, professional standards in journalism and the need for media pluralism as a way of de-escalating tensions in conflict zones. The journalists will meet again next week at my Office to continue their work.

I also have plans to assist journalists covering the conflict by holding sessions on safety issues and providing specialized training on covering conflicts.

The work of my Office will not slow down. It is my mandate to bring information to you on media violations in all countries. Though my message on these issues may be monotonous –

hence the phrase which I began with – the more things change, the more they stay the same – I consider the job to be done too important to gloss over. The issues at stake in Ukraine are central to the issues of free media and free expression across the entire OSCE region. They have my full attention.

Allow me to move on to other issues.

I would be remiss not to mention matters that my Office also has addressed and will address in the next reporting period.

I note, with disappointment, that backsliding on journalists' rights continues in some of our participating States. Journalists are now routinely stopped on the street and taken in for questioning for no apparent reason. They are fined for not having state-imposed accreditation. They are thrown in jail for allegedly abusing drugs – when they aren't, of course. They face criminal charges and have been hit with criminal fines for defamation.

And they face possible jail time for contempt of court if they refuse to disclose the identity of confidential sources in criminal trials.

Laws have been passed in this last reporting period that, in essence, recriminalize defamation – and provide politicians with more, not less protection in the public square for comments made about them.

And across the region they are subject to, as they are in Ukraine, all types of violence, including attacks by law enforcement officials, especially when covering public demonstrations.

The assault on New Media continues, too. Websites continue to be blocked by participating States in the last six months, as do file-sharing sites such as YouTube and Twitter.

I also find it disturbing that the right to free expression is under assault, as governments find it necessary to pass laws criminalizing certain views of historical events.

Is all of the news bad? Perhaps not.

First, I am pleased to report that yesterday we learned that the public service announcement prepared for our Office and for the Commission for the Investigation of Murders of Journalists in Serbia, had been awarded the Cannes Bronze Lion in the category "Use of Media" for the OSCE 'Chronicles of Threats' campaign at the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity, the world's biggest annual awards festival for creative communications. This award shows how important the campaign to raise awareness of the murders of journalists is as a step in achieving our goal of ending impunity for those who attack them.

As well, I am happy to note that I continue to work with participating States that are making a good-faith effort to adopt legal regimes beneficial to free media.

I note with pleasure that Ukraine adopted a new law in April on public broadcasting which contains provisions that take significant steps toward reinforcing media freedom. I am

pleased that the Verkhovna Rada took into account major recommendations made by my Office regarding the draft law.

I continue working with international organizations on projects where we have a common interest and complement each other. I worked with three other international rapporteurs on free media for a joint declaration on the universality of the right of freedom of expression. My Office and I have worked with the UN Human Rights Council and the Council of Europe in recent months. Just last week I participated in the 26th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva and, also last week, the Italian newspaper *Il Corriere della Sera* published a joint op-ed calling on Italy to fully decriminalize defamation, authored by the UN Special Rapporteur and the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights and me.

Perhaps most importantly, my Office continues to organize training events that substantially increase the expertise of practitioners and government authorities in technical areas, including master classes on the digital switchover for South East Europe and classes on the conversion to public service broadcasting.

In the past 20 months alone my Office has conducted master classes in online media regulation for Central Asia and South Caucasus states, a seminar on Internet media in Belarus and we plan to train journalists and law enforcement officers in dealing with scenes of civil disobedience to avoid seeing police target the media during demonstrations.

In an exciting venture, we have embarked on a multi-year project to examine the effect of technological changes on media. With the generous support of Sweden, joined by the Czech Republic and Serbia, we launched an “Open Journalism” project in May, which many of you attended, with the purpose providing advice and guidance to participating States on the challenges posed by the new paradigm in media. From that, a series of master classes will be held in the regions to develop the skills of those involved in process, from representatives of media organizations, the online community, relevant government ministries, Internet intermediaries, legislators and lawyers.

The next expert meeting will focus on legislative and regulatory aspects of the issue and is scheduled for 19 September.

It is my hope that the Representative’s Office can play a leading role in understanding what the next generation of media advancement holds for us.

I believe all of you are aware that our extensive training and project activities are funded in large part by extra-budgetary contributions. If we were to rely or attempt to depend upon funds provided in the unified budget, the projects would simply vanish. For long-term sustainability and viability, these events should be part of a rational, unified budget which is funded appropriately. Otherwise, nothing will change and nothing **can** change unless and until there is the political will mustered to make it happen.

Too many nations around the world know that, like democracy, free media and free speech do not come naturally and cannot be taken for granted. They must be constantly justified, reaffirmed and strengthened. That is the reason you created this Office and what you must consider to in order to make sure it functions properly and professionally in carrying out the mission.

Issues raised with participating States

Albania

Following an agreement with the government that my Office will provide advice on the ongoing transition from analogue to digital terrestrial television, on **27 November** I wrote to Minister of Innovation and Public Administration Milena Harito specifying our planned steps in this process.

On **6 December** I provided Minister Harito with a report, “Recommendations and examples for digital switch-over in Albania, especially regarding ownership and management of transmission facilities” commissioned by my Office.

(See Legal reviews)

On 18 December I received a letter from Genc Pollo, Chairman of the Education and Media Committee of the Parliament, expressing concern about the latest draft amendments to the audiovisual media law, particularly the proposed provisions on the Audiovisual Media Authority.

On **13 January** I wrote to Chairman Pollo and Deputy Chairman Alfred Peza to share the conclusions of a round-table discussion on reform of the Public Broadcaster organized by the OSCE and the Albanian Media Institute. I expressed the importance of developing a public broadcasting system that will serve the needs of citizens and pointed out the need for a transparent reform of the nomination process of the Steering Board of the public service broadcaster, open for public debate and scrutiny, and in line with international standards and best practices. I offered to organize a follow-up discussion once the Steering Board was appointed.

On **15 January** I replied to Chairman Pollo’s letter of 18 December stating the importance of the Audiovisual Media Authority as a truly independent body and expressing readiness to provide a legal analysis of the latest proposed changes.

In a 17 January letter Chairman Pollo reiterated the need for continued co-operation between the Education and Media Committee and my Office.

On **14 March** following an official request by the Speaker of Parliament Ilir Meta, I provided a legal review of the draft amendments to the audiovisual law. I stated that the independence of the broadcast regulatory authorities requires the independence of board members. I also said that a statutory provision to dismiss members of the regulatory authority without specifying legal reasons and underlying causes would violate the original mandate of the Audiovisual Media Authority. I called on various members of the legislative branch to reach a consensus, with the involvement of media and civil society, upon completion of current reforms.

In a 31 March letter Minister Harito wrote to me, Christian Danielsson, Director General for Enlargement at the European Commission and Thorbjorn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, about developments in the digital switch-over process.

(See Activities planned for the next reporting period)

Armenia

On **2 December** I wrote to the authorities concerning the police detention and attack on Vardan Minasyan, a journalist with the newspaper Hraparak. I said that any attack by law enforcement on members of the media is unacceptable and, further, it is their responsibility to assist and protect them.

On **14 February** I wrote to the authorities and issued a public statement condemning police obstruction of journalists' activities while covering a public demonstration in Yerevan on 12 February. Ani Gevorkyan and Sarkis Gevorkyan, journalists with the Chorrord Ishkhanutyun newspaper and iLur.am news portal, respectively, were assaulted and detained by police. While in custody, police officers searched the journalists and erased all recorded material from their cameras. I called on the authorities to conduct a thorough and transparent investigation of the incident and to take all necessary steps to avoid police misconduct toward members of the media in the future.

I received letters from the authorities on 19 February and 17 March regarding the incidents. I was pleased to learn that the Head of Police initiated an internal investigation into the police misconduct against Gevorkyan. Reportedly, the case is now in the hands of the Special Investigative Body. I look forward to receiving the results of the investigation.

On **28 March** I presented to the authorities a legal review commissioned by my Office on draft amendments to the Civil Code concerning liability of media outlets for defamatory or insulting comments, especially when posted by anonymous users. While the draft law is a good starting point for combating the dissemination of offensive statements, my Office noted that the proposed amendments lack clarity and contain a certain degree of vagueness. In addition, a number of provisions in the proposal may place difficult time limits on media to remove offending comments. I learned that consideration of the draft law in the Parliament was postponed until next year. I will continue monitoring the issue.

(See Legal reviews)

Austria

On **27 January** I issued a public statement addressing access restrictions placed on journalists covering the ball of academic associations in Vienna's Hofburg Palace. I noted that journalists should have been granted full access to this event.

Azerbaijan

On **11 December** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Elmar Mammadyarov regarding several worrying developments, including the sentencing of Nijat Aliyev, editor-in-chief of the azadxeber.org news website, on 9 December by the Baku Court to 10 years imprisonment for various crimes. I also raised the 22 November arrest of Abdul Abilov, an online activist and blogger, on drug-related charges and the 4 December interrogation of and official warning given to Natig Adilov, a correspondent with the newspaper Azadliq.

On 19 May I received a response from authorities informing me that Aliyev's criminal conviction was fully supported by valid evidence and that any allegations stating that he was

prosecuted for expressing a critical viewpoint are entirely without merit. They also assured me that Abilov's arrest was not linked to his Facebook posts criticizing authorities. I will continue monitoring the situation involving these convicted journalists.

On **27 January** I wrote to the authorities expressing concern about the arrest of Omar Mamedov, an online activist, on drug-related charges. I expressed hope that the allegations against him will be thoroughly investigated and requested more information on the case.

On 24 February I received a letter from the Administration of the President informing me that the detention of Mamedov is not related to his Internet activity, but rather based on concrete evidence. I will continue to follow Mamedov's case.

On **6 February** I wrote to the authorities and expressed my concern about reports that, since January, Baku authorities have terminated the licenses of kiosk owners selling newspapers. Although this decision was reportedly due to the pending renovation of the kiosks, I expressed concern about the effect it might have on citizens to freely receive information through regular media distribution channels. I requested more information on the situation.

I received a response on 8 April informing me that the kiosks have been replaced by modern newsstands in different residential areas and that the authorities are setting up a modern network for the sale of print media.

On **25 February** I wrote to Minister Mammadyarov regarding reports that the Prosecutor's Office required Khadija Ismayilova, a RFE/RL journalist, to disclose confidential sources. I expressed hope that Ismayilova's right not to disclose the identity of her sources will be respected. I also brought his attention to the cases of online activists and bloggers Abilov and Mamedov.

On 8 April I was informed by authorities that Ismayilova had been treated in accordance with existing legislation and that her civil and professional rights had not been violated. I was also assured that both Abilov and Mamedov's arrests were not linked to their work as journalists and that their cases are being addressed in accordance with national legislation and in line with the country's international obligations. I will continue to follow the developments in these cases.

On **22 April** I wrote to the authorities expressing my concern about the arrest of Rauf Mirkadyrov, a journalist from the newspaper Zerkalo, on charges of high treason. I expressed hope that such serious charges would be very carefully investigated and requested more information on the case.

In a response from the authorities on 19 May, I was told that Mirkadyrov's detention was not related to his role as a journalist, but based on evidence.

On **28 April** I wrote to the authorities raising the issue of an attack on Farahim Ilgaroglu, a journalist from the newspaper Yeni Musavat. I stated that I was pleased that the police have initiated an investigation into the matter and expressed hope that the perpetrator will be identified and brought to justice. I also requested additional information on the case.

On **7 May** I issued a public statement condemning the attack by police on Etimad Budagov, a journalist with Turan news agency, the detention of Mahammad Turkmen from Yeni Musavat, Khalid Garayev from Azadliq and Amid Suleymanov from the Mediaforum website

and the attempted detention of Parvana Bairamova of the Turan news agency and a contributor to Voice of America, by law enforcement agencies on 6 May. I emphasized that attacks on journalists by law enforcement is especially unacceptable given their responsibility to protect members of the media.

I also condemned the attack on Huseyn Azizoglu, a journalist with Obyektiv TV, in the presence of police on 7 May, which resulted in injuries and damage to his camera. I expressed hope that these incidents will be subject to a swift and transparent investigation.

On **15 May** I issued a public statement expressing my outrage by the eight year prison sentence handed down to Parviz Hashimli, a journalist with the newspaper Bizim Yol, and called on the authorities to stop imprisoning journalists for their work.

I also used the opportunity to bring attention to the lengthy sentences handed down to other journalists, such as Nijat Aliyev (mentioned above), Sardar Alibeyli, editor-in-chief of the P.S. Nota newspaper and Rashad Ramazanov, an independent blogger.

In addition, I expressed concern about the 14 May detention, seizure of materials and expulsion from the country of Laurent Richard and Emmanuel Bach, French journalists with Premières Lignes.

On **20 May** I wrote to the authorities regarding the 16 May attack on Islam Shikhaliyev, a reporter for Azadliq Radiosu, in which assailants attacked the journalist and took his camera and mobile phone in the presence of police officers who, reportedly, did not intervene. I expressed hope that a speedy investigation would result in the perpetrators being brought to justice.

On **20 May** I wrote to the authorities regarding the 26 May attack on another Azadliq Radiosu reporter, Elchin Ismail, in which assailants beat him and broke his camera. I again expressed hope that a speedy investigation would bring the perpetrators to justice. In the same letter I said that I was pleased to learn that journalists Faramaz Novruzoglu (Allahverdiyev) and Fuad Huseynov were granted amnesty.

On **29 May** I wrote to the authorities concerning the five- and a half-year prison sentence handed down to blogger Abdul Abilov. I also mentioned the case of Parviz Hashimli and expressed hope that the Appeals Court would overturn both verdicts.

With Abilov's conviction there are now more than 10 members of the media in prison, convicted or awaiting trial, which is the highest number in the country my Office has observed since it was established. This troubling trend is a sign of a rapidly deteriorating media freedom environment, which discourages investigative journalism and contributes to a climate of threat and intimidation.

Belarus

On **27 January** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Makei to express my concern that newly implemented changes in the law “on information, information technologies and protection of information” did not employ the majority of the recommendations presented in a legal review commissioned by my Office at the request of the Belarussian government.

On **11 March** I wrote to the authorities regarding the short-term detention of Belsat TV journalists Siarzhuk Kruchkou, Nasta Reznikava and Aliaksandr Patseyeu on 5 February in the Vitebskaya oblast.

The journalists were released only after providing a written explanation for their presence in the area.

I also expressed concern about the detention for several hours of a group of journalists, including Vladimir Gridin (a contributor to Radio Liberty), Irina Orekhovskaya (Nasha Niva newspaper), Vasilij Semashko (BelaPAN news agency), Sergei Gapon (Komsomolskaya Pravda in Belarus newspaper), Artem Lyava (milinkevich.org), Inna Studzinskaya (Radio Liberty) and Yevgenii Yerchak (Tut.by news portal) on March 2 in Minsk.

In reply, I received a letter on 11 May stating that the journalists detained on 5 February did not have journalist licenses or any other accreditation documents. As for the incident on 2 March, I was informed that the journalists refused to provide adequate information or necessary identification documents and that police acted lawfully.

On **13 May** I wrote to the authorities regarding the short-term detention of a crew from Radio Svoboda on 9 May near Minsk Arena. They were released after providing identification and a written explanation for their presence.

I noted that the harassment and short-term detention of journalists continues even though I was given assurances that the authorities would become seriously engaged in order to stop this unnecessary practice. I requested additional information on these events.

On **5 June** I wrote to Minister Makei to express my concern about the growing number of warnings and fines issued to journalists who work without accreditation given their affiliation with media outlets not registered with the authorities. I said that because accreditation is not a work permit, the lack thereof should not deprive journalists of their ability to work. I urged the government to reform the accreditation requirements for journalists as part of the plans to liberalize media legislation and offered the assistance of my Office.

On **17 June** I issued a public statement calling on the authorities to repeal accreditation requirements for journalists. I said that the requirements can effectively ban journalists from reporting and raised the case of Andrey Meleshko who was fined on 16 June for working for Polish-based Radio Racya without accreditation. I also noted similar cases of journalists who were fined or received warnings for their affiliation with media outlets not officially registered.

I look forward to visiting Minsk in autumn as my Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs plan to carry out a training course on the interaction between law enforcement agencies and members of the media. I also plan to meet with Minister Makei to discuss co-operation between my Office and the authorities aimed at further promoting media freedom in the country.

Belgium

On **25 March** I issued a public statement warning that a proposed law criminalizing certain forms of expression, most notably incitement to gender discrimination, would potentially endanger media freedom. According to the proposal, penalties for sexist and other discriminatory expressions based on gender include fines and prison sentences of up to one year. I stressed that these sanctions are too harsh and that the vague wording can lead to broad interpretation. I also noted that all speech, even that considered offensive, painful or provocative and not in line with most basic democratic principles and values, must be allowed.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

On **14 January** I wrote to the Minister of Security to express my concern about a Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) attacks on a number of news portals that resulted in a loss of service. I emphasized the importance of investigating such attacks and asked the Minister to keep me informed about the investigation.

On **27 January** I issued a public statement condemning an attack on journalist Sinan Alić in Tuzla. According to media reports, Alić was hospitalized with head injuries. An investigation was launched. I stated that attacks on journalists must not go unpunished and expressed hope that the authorities would do everything possible to prevent future attacks.

On **5 February** in a public statement I condemned a police attack on RTV Slon cameraman Branislav Pavičić. According to media reports, the incident took place while Pavičić, who was wearing media identification, was filming a protest in front of the Tuzla Canton Government building. I welcomed the fact that the authorities publicly condemned the attack and urged a full investigation.

On **14 February** I issued a public statement condemning the intimidation of a journalist by law enforcement officers in Tuzla. According to media reports, two officers forced the journalist to hand over footage he recorded at recent protests and to testify against demonstrators. Police officers also demanded telephone numbers of Tuzla journalists to question them about the work of the BH Journalists Association. I called upon the authorities to ensure the safety of journalists and said journalists and editors should demonstrate the highest level of professionalism, particularly in situations of social and political unrest.

On **28 February** I issued a public statement condemning the labelling of certain media outlets as “foreign agents” by politicians. The Alliance of Independent Social Democrats listed a number of nongovernmental organizations and media outlets on its website as allegedly engaged by foreign countries for “stimulating disturbances and undermining of the constitutional order.” I said that such acts represent a clear attack on media freedom and could jeopardize journalists’ safety, intimidate journalists and have a chilling effect on the media.

I am awaiting a response from the authorities to my long-standing proposal to pay an official visit to the country.

Bulgaria

On **2 April** I issued a public statement condemning a second arson attack on a car of television journalist Genka Shikerova. A similar incident occurred in September 2013 without prosecution. I emphasized the need to launch thorough investigations into both attacks because the failure to do so suggests impunity for assailants.

I hope to receive updates on the status of these investigations.

Croatia

On **21 February** I wrote to Vesna Pusić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, about potential criminal defamation charges against journalist Ernest Marinković. I said such charges can create a chilling effect on the media. I urged the government to decriminalize defamation and expressed the readiness of my Office to assist in this process.

On **20 March** I wrote to Minister Pusić expressing concern about assaults on journalists Ante Tomić and Vinko Vuković and stating that both incidents represented clear attacks on free media. I called on the authorities to fully investigate and requested that they share with me any additional information.

On **7 April** I again wrote to Minister Pusić and issued a public statement the following day to express my deep concern about recent convictions and pending charges against journalists Slavica Lukić and Vladimir Matijanić on criminal defamation and insult charges. I once again asked the authorities to initiate legal reforms to fully decriminalize insult and defamation.

On 5 June I received a reply from Minister Pusić in response to my earlier letters regarding several cases related to criminal defamation in Croatia. In her letter, Minister Pusić assured me that the government attaches great importance to free, independent and pluralistic media as an essential component of a free and open society and accountable systems of any government. She further noted that criminal offences against honour and reputation in the existing provisions on insult, defamation and libel in the Criminal Code, which went into effect on 1 January, are based on relevant recommendations of the Council of Europe.

Denmark

On **13 May** I issued a public statement concerning criminal fines for defamation handed down to Kåre Quist, Dorthe Vest Andersen, Sara Munck Andersen and Lisbeth Kølster, journalists with the Danish Broadcasting Corporation. They were fined for allegations in a 2009 radio broadcast in which they criticized Boligadministratorerne A/S, a housing association.

I also renewed my call during a visit to Copenhagen in November 2013 (www.osce.org/fom/118508) to fully decriminalize defamation and for additional civil law reforms that would establish reasonable damage limits in civil defamation cases.

France

On **14 January** I wrote to Minister of Interior Manuel Valls requesting the annulment of a performance ban placed on comedian Dieudonné M'Bala M'Bala by local authorities. I stated that in free societies people must be allowed to express their opinions and views no matter how offensive and shocking they may be. I also said that only extreme and threatening cases of hate speech require an ex-post response by public authorities. Prior restraint and preventive prohibitions should always be considered a disproportionate and thus unacceptable restriction. I stressed that a broad notion of public order is not a legitimate basis for limiting freedom of expression in a democratic society.

On 21 February I received a reply from the authorities stating that the ban of the show in question was based on its anti-Semitic nature, his previous criminal convictions and the clear risk the shows pose for public disorder. It also stated that, having been confirmed by the Council of State, the ban was legitimate and in line with international commitments.

Georgia

On **9 January** I wrote to David Usupashvili, Chairman of the Parliament, expressing my disappointment that no new members had been elected to the Georgian Public Broadcaster's (GPB) Board of Trustees despite a number of competent applicants being nominated by the Public Selection Commission. I encouraged the authorities to work toward the timely election of a new board.

I was pleased to learn that as of May 21 the Board has a new Chairman and seven members and is now authorized to begin regular operations. I hope that the remaining two members will be selected soon.

On **16 May** I replied to a 17 April letter from Maia Panjikidze, Minister of Foreign Affairs, regarding the detention of a Georgian TV 3 channel crew near Tskhinvali, stating that the detention constitutes a clear violation of the rights of the journalists and obstructs the free flow of information and media freedom. As the problems of crossing of the Administrative Boundary Line with South Ossetia are dealt with in the context of the Geneva International Discussions, my Office forwarded information on the case to Ambassador Angelo Gnaedinger, the Special Representative of the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship, for the next round of talks.

I was pleased to hear that the journalists were released the next day.

On 6 June I received a reply from Ambassador Gnaedinger about his personal involvement, along with EU and UN representatives, in the release of journalists. He said that the case was discussed at the 44th meeting of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism on 28 April in Ergneti and may be raised during the 29th Round of the Geneva International Discussions.

Also on **16 May** I wrote to Minister Panjikidze to express concern regarding reports that the office of Rustavi 2, one of the largest television news channels in Georgia, was under video and audio surveillance. I stressed that if these reports were confirmed, it would constitute a serious obstacle to media freedom and the work of journalists throughout the country. I noted

that the Prosecutor's Office has launched an investigation into the matter and expressed hope that the proceedings would be transparent and thorough.

On 28 May I received a response from Minister Panjikidze stating that the Office of the Chief Prosecutor has launched an investigation into the case. The Minister forwarded me the interim findings of the investigation and assured me that the government attaches utmost importance to media freedom and will do its best to ensure media independence.

Greece

On **13 December** I wrote to Foreign Minister Evangelos Venizelos expressing my concern about an attack on Star TV reporter Panagiotis Bousis and his cameraman on 9 December. I called particular attention to the disconcerting fact that law enforcement officers present did not intervene. I urged authorities to publicly denounce all attacks on journalists and begin a thorough investigation.

On 20 January I received a response saying that because no official complaint or report of the alleged incident had been submitted, there would not be an investigation. I was also informed that, according to the competent authorities, police present at the event had not witnessed any such attack nor had any other evidence of the attack been presented to the authorities.

On **22 January** I once again wrote to Foreign Minister Venizelos regarding blogger Filippos Loizos' 10-month suspended prison sentence for insulting religion. I emphasized that the free flow of ideas should not be restricted on the grounds of protecting religious sentiments and asked that the authorities consider reforming current legislation on blasphemy and insult to religion and offered my Office's assistance in this regard.

On 2 April I received a response saying that the sentence was handed down by an independent court and that an appeal had been filed. The letter also noted that the relevant article of the existing Penal Code might be reviewed by the newly established Special Legislative Drafting Committee, created by the Ministry of Justice to prepare a draft of a new Penal Code.

Hungary

I closely followed the Constitutional Court's review of the Civil Code provision restricting criticism of public figures. A 5 March ruling found the provision to be unconstitutional, stating that opinions, including value judgments, expressed on public issues cannot give rise to civil liability.

I welcome this ruling as a pronouncement of the importance placed on freedom of speech and trust that it will advance pluralism and public debate.

On **29 May** in a public statement I warned that imposing unconditional and direct responsibilities on Internet content providers can stifle free debate on issues of public interest. On 28 May the Constitutional Court dismissed a complaint filed by the Association of Hungarian Content Providers concerning derogatory comments made by third parties on a website managed by a content provider.

I noted that the ruling could significantly curb free debate in the country, adding that the decision to place unconditional responsibility on content providers for all comments posted on their websites by third parties will make it very likely that several online comments will be restricted or blocked. I stated that international standards and best practices establish the need to hold content providers responsible for comments by third parties only if they were aware of the harmful nature of the comments and refuse to remove them.

I follow with concern the recent raids on NGOs, including the investigative website www.atlatszo.hu (www.transparency.hu). I also follow closely the imposition of a new advertising tax on the media, as it can negatively affect the media landscape and further decrease media pluralism in the country. I note with concern the lack of public consultations and the expedited procedure through which the new law was adopted on 11 June. On issues significantly affecting the media landscape, an open and informed debate is of crucial importance to democracy.

Italy

In response to my letter of 11 November regarding proposed amendments to Law No. 925 on defamation, on 13 January I received a letter from Foreign Minister Emma Bonino assuring me that she would pass on my call for decriminalization of defamation to the competent authorities. She also informed me that Francesco Gangemi, editor of monthly newspaper *Dibattito News*, had been released from prison and is under house arrest.

The draft law is still pending approval by the Italian Senate.

On 6 February my Office's expert, Boyko Boev of Article 19 and author of the legal analysis on Law No. 925 of November 2013, participated in a discussion in Rome organized by the NGO *Ossigeno per l'Informazione* with the patronage of the Italian Senate on "Diffamazione: tutela della reputazione e liberta di stampa" (Defamation: protection of reputation and freedom of the press) in which he outlined the main points of the analysis. The object of the conference was to discuss the most problematic and sensitive areas of the draft law.

On 8 June the Italian newspaper *Il Corriere della Sera* published an op-ed article "Diffamazione: progetto di legge da rifare," signed by UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression Frank la Rue, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Nils Muiznieks and me. This article stresses the need to fully decriminalize defamation in Italy in order to respect international standards in the areas of free expression and free media.

Kazakhstan

On **13 February** in a letter to Minister of Foreign Affairs Erlan Idrissov I voiced my concern about an announcement by Chair of the Agency for Religious Affairs Marat Azylkhanov on 3 February that all television programs will require approval by the Agency before broadcasting. Azylkhanov later clarified that he was referring to programs produced under public procurement contracts.

In the letter I questioned the scope and mechanisms of the screening procedures and the procedure to ensure how the Agency would protect editorial independence without engaging in censorship. I noted that editorial independence applies to all content, regardless of whether it is funded by private or public funds.

On 7 April I received a reply from Minister Idrissov informing me that the Agency for Religious Affairs is not empowered to pre-screen any media content. The Agency's role will be to provide expert theological reviews and give recommendations.

On **19 February** in a letter to Minister Idrissov I raised the issue of website blocking, specifically ratel.su, a site that specializes in analytical and investigative reporting. I also requested information on the criteria applied by the authorities that resulted in blocks on 596 websites over the past three years for "propaganda of extremism and terrorism."

On 7 April I received a reply from Minister Idrissov stating that the measures were taken to protect citizens from "damaging extremist materials." He informed me that the blocking of the websites was the result of a court decision. He noted that 433 of the websites were blocked for promoting terrorism, 78 for religious extremism, 37 for nationalistic extremism and 48 for dissemination of information on the production of explosive devices.

With regard to ratel.su, the Minister clarified that the authorities have not blocked the site and it is still accessible to the public.

On **26 February** I issued a public statement on the closure of the newspaper Pravdivaya Gazeta by a district court in Almaty on 24 February for a series of minor administrative offenses. The newspaper was found guilty of listing false figures related to published copies and an incorrect date of publication. I expressed concern that minor offenses and petty irregularities cannot be used to limit media freedom. I also expressed concern that this seems to be a growing trend and urged the authorities to take steps to reverse it.

A recent legal review of the Administrative Code of Kazakhstan commissioned by my Office also emphasized the need to remove disproportionate penalties against media from the Administrative Code.

On **11 April** I expressed concern about a series of changes in laws and regulations that could restrict media freedom and Internet access and result in the restriction of public debate. I called on the authorities to reconsider the following changes:

New rules giving the government greater control of media reporting during a state of emergency; a new article to the Criminal Code criminalizing the dissemination of false information online or through the media, punishable with a prison sentence of up to five years and amendments to the law "On Communications" which allow the prosecutor to temporarily shut down websites and entire communications networks for distributing information "harmful" to individuals, society or the state or for containing "extremist" rhetoric.

Terms are not clearly defined in all three proposals and allow for very broad interpretation. When combined with the added burden of harsh sentences in the Criminal Code, these changes might result in an extreme chilling effect for media in the country. I urged the authorities to take into account the recommendations of my Office's latest legal review.

With regret, I learned that the President signed the communications law amendments and they went into effect on 5 May. I also learned that the Parliament has approved the changes to the Criminal Code and that they await the approval of the President.

On **17 April** I wrote to the authorities to ask for more information following reports that police officers physically obstructed the work of a number of journalists on 15 April in Astana, resulting in injury to one of the journalists.

Kyrgyzstan

On **23 April** I presented a legal review on a bill amending an article in the Criminal Code on the false reporting of a crime and called on President Almaz Atambayev to veto the measure because it could *de facto* reintroduce defamation as a crime, in contradiction to the 2010 Constitution. I expressed particular concern about a provision in the amendment that would introduce stronger protection for public officials against accusations of corruption.

I noted with regret that on 17 May the bill was signed into law accompanied by a statement that the law only applies to those who knowingly disseminate false information. I will be closely following implementation of the law and hope that it will not lead to setbacks in the progress Kyrgyzstan has made in promoting media freedom and free expression.

(See Legal reviews)

Latvia

On **14 February** I issued a public statement expressing concern about proposed amendments to the Criminal Law that outlaw “the public denial or glorification of Soviet and Nazi actions against Latvia” and include prison terms for such offences of up to three years. I called on the authorities to carefully reflect on the proposed changes because the vaguely worded law could be interpreted in a way that would infringe upon the right to free expression, stifle pluralistic debate and negatively affect free media. I noted that while historical debates can be very sensitive, any legislative provisions criminalizing public expression and speech should be restricted to instances of intentional and dangerous incitement to violence only, in line with the international media freedom standards and principles.

On **27 March** I wrote to Vineta Porina, a Member of Parliament, in reply to her letter of 24 February, which expressed concern about my statement on the draft law. I wrote that in democratic societies free expression must prevail, regardless of the controversial nature of the views expressed.

I was pleased to note that Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs also expressed concern about the draft law along the same lines, indicating that the proposed wording of the draft law restricts free speech. Unfortunately, on 15 May the Parliament adopted the law in a final reading, even extending prison terms for public denial for up to five years.

Correction: In July my Office learned that the proposed amendment that was the subject of the 14 February press release was not adopted on 15 May by Parliament. The confusion was caused by the fact that the Parliament did adopt on 15 May amendments to another article of the Criminal Code 74¹ (“Justification of genocide, crimes against humanity, crimes against peace and war crimes”) that makes criminal the denial or gross trivialization of certain acts, “including acts of genocide, crimes against humanity, crimes against peace or war crimes carried out by the USSR or Nazi Germany against the Republic of Latvia and its population” punishable by imprisonment of up to 5 years.

Lithuania

As a follow up to my 15 November 2013 letter to the authorities regarding the mandatory disclosure of sources for Baltic News Service journalists, I was pleased to note that a Vilnius court revoked this requirement in December and found that the search of the editor's property had been unlawful.

On **17 December** I participated in the conference in Vilnius "Civic responsible media cultivation and society right to know" organized by the Lithuanian Journalists' Union and Ministry of Culture and spoke on journalist's rights, safety and decriminalization of defamation. The conference was held in the Seimas and brought together representatives from business, politics, media and civil society.

On **5 February** I presented Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas, with a legal review commissioned by my Office on the draft law amending provisions of the Criminal Code and Administrative Code and issued a public statement on **10 February** on the issue.

Overall, the review found that the proposed amendments would have a positive impact on free expression and media freedom, although some aspects of the Defamation Law required further attention. I learned that the draft law was approved by the Parliament in the first reading, but was sent to the Committee on Legal Affairs for further discussions after receiving negative feedback from the government. I will continue to monitor the issue.

(See Legal reviews)

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

On **20 January** I wrote to Foreign Minister Nikola Poposki regarding a civil defamation judgment against a Fokus journalist and editor-in-chief for damaging the reputation and honour of Security and Counter-Intelligence Directorate Director Saso Mijalkov. I wrote that public officials need to endure a higher threshold of criticism and that judgments in any case need to be proportional so as to not bankrupt the media outlet, thus weakening media pluralism. I wrote that I will closely follow the additional civil libel lawsuits brought against Fokus.

On **10-12 February** I visited Skopje upon the invitation of Minister of Information Society and Administration Ivo Ivanovski. I met with Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and Minister Ivanovski to discuss media freedom in the country, in particular the newly adopted media laws and the conviction of journalist Tomislav Kezarovski.

I noted that the laws are a positive development that includes several features suggested by my Office's legal expert. I will continue to follow their implementation to ensure media independence and plurality are promoted.

During the visit I also had meetings with a number of media representatives, including heads of the Association of Journalists of Macedonia, the Macedonian Institute for Media, the Independent Trade Union of Journalist and Media Workers and the Macedonian Association of Journalists', as well as several journalists.

In co-operation with the authorities, I concluded my trip on 12 February with a visit to Kezarovski at his home, where he is under house arrest awaiting his appeal. I will continue to follow his case closely.

On **24 February** I wrote to Prime Minister Gruevski and Minister Ivanovski thanking them for the fruitful discussions and reiterating some main concerns and opportunities for future co-operation.

On 20 March I received a letter from Prime Minister Gruevski in response to my letter dated 24 February, in which I raised concern over the lack of transparency in how public bodies spend their advertising budgets. He assured me that advertising is used for information and education purposes and that the selection procedure is carried out by an independent agency. With regard to my concerns about civil defamation cases, to which I also raised attention in my letter, I was assured that only one non-final judgment for defamation has been imposed against media.

On **21 May** I issued a public statement expressing concern regarding the coercive actions by law enforcement officers directed toward journalists covering demonstrations in Skopje. I called on the authorities to swiftly investigate this incident and to take steps to ensure that law enforcement agencies respect the rights of the members of the media.

To support self-regulation in the country my Office has selected an expert to prepare a needs assessment, help draft a strategy paper, including an annual action plan and conduct two workshops for the members of the Press Council, the first of which is scheduled to begin on 14 July.

Moldova

On **14 January** I issued a public statement condemning the exclusion of three television channels from several cable networks. I called on the authorities and the regulatory body to immediately look into this matter in order to preserve media pluralism in the country.

I was pleased to learn that the cable networks resumed broadcasts on all three channels a short time later.

On **17-19 March** I paid an official visit to the country at the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where I met with authorities, representatives of the broadcasting regulator, public service broadcasters, civil society and journalists from both banks of the Dniester/Nistru River. Among other issues, I discussed the lack of transparency in media ownership, concentration of the advertising market, the slow digital switchover process and low public awareness regarding digitalization, as well as a weak and financially dependent public service broadcaster.

I expressed concern with the delay in launching the digital switch-over, which must be completed in 2015, and noted the need for taking specific steps, including introducing related technical regulations in the legislation. I noted that the majority of recommendations from the legal analysis of the Programme on the Transition from Analogue Terrestrial Television to Digital Terrestrial Television commissioned by my Office in 2012 were taken into account. The legal analysis is available at <http://www.osce.org/fom/92575>

(See Visits and participation in events)

On **8 May** I presented authorities with a legal review commissioned by my Office regarding several proposed amendments to the audiovisual legislation. Despite some minor improvements, the review found that the proposed amendments lack clarity, overlap and fail to reflect the interests of all stakeholders.

(See Legal reviews)

Montenegro

On 27 November I received a letter from Minister of Interior Rasko Konjevic in response to my previous interventions on the safety of journalists. He assured me that the attacks on the newspaper Vijesti and on journalist Tufik Softic are strongly condemned by all relevant state institutions and that the government and ministry are working to create an environment in which free expression and the safety of journalists are foundations for democratic development.

On **17 December** I wrote to Igor Luksic, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, to reflect on our meeting at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Kyiv where we discussed the safety of journalists. I also requested an official visit to the country.

On **4 January** in a public statement I condemned an attack on Dan newspaper journalist Lidija Nikčević and called on authorities to finally end impunity for assaults on journalists.

On **13 February** I issued a public statement expressing concern about another attack on the daily newspaper Vijesti and noted that this event adds to the dangerous trend of violence and hostility toward members of the media.

On **19 February** I wrote to Minister Luksic to reiterate my request for an official visit to Montenegro, the logistics of which my Office and the Permanent Representation of Montenegro are now planning.

On **27 May** I issued a public statement on the 10th anniversary of the murder of journalist Duško Jovanović. I urged the authorities to ensure a thorough and transparent investigation to identify those behind the crime and bring them to justice.

On **4 June** I met with State Secretary Vladimir Radulović to discuss my upcoming official visit to Montenegro and other media freedom related issues.

Romania

On **12 December** I wrote to the authorities and issued a public statement expressing concern about amendments that would re-criminalize defamation. The amendments have been widely criticized by civil society for their potential chilling effect on media.

I pointed out that civil society and other vital stakeholders were left out of the consultations on the new draft provisions. I called on Parliament to reconsider the amendments in order to ensure that journalists are able to report on issues of public interest without fear of criminal charges.

I was pleased to see that the new Criminal Code, which went into effect on 1 February, contained no provisions regarding "crimes against human dignity."

Russian Federation

On 11 December I received a response from the authorities to my letter of 8 November about the detention and interrogation of Øystein Bogen and Aage Aune from the Norwegian TV2 channel who were detained on three separate occasions and interrogated six times in Southwest Russia.

I was informed that the incident was the result of a technical error on the part of representatives of the regional law enforcement authorities. The authorities assured me that the event was thoroughly investigated and all those responsible were duly penalized.

On **20 December** I wrote to the authorities expressing concern regarding the conviction and sentencing of Sergei Reznik, a well-known investigative journalist and blogger in Rostov-on-Don, who was found guilty of insulting a public official, bribery and deliberately misleading authorities and sentenced to one and a half years in a work colony.

I asked for more information on the case and expressed hope that his imprisonment is not related to his work as a journalist known for his critical reporting.

On 15 April I learned that the appeals court upheld Reznik's conviction.

According to reports, on 11 June a new criminal case was filed against Reznik for insulting a government official. I will follow this case closely.

On **20 December** I issued a public statement calling on the members of the State Duma to reconsider the proposed changes to the Law "On information, information technologies and on protection of information" which would allow the Prosecutor General and his deputies to block websites containing content such as calls to participate in public events held in violation of government regulations and for extremist activities, a concept broadly defined within the legislation.

I was disappointed to learn that the amendments were passed and then signed into law by the President of the Russian Federation on 30 December.

The same day I issued another statement welcoming the conviction of Pavel Sopot for ordering the murder of Igor Domnikov, a Novaya Gazeta journalist killed in 2000. I also welcomed the potential amnesty for members of the punk band Pussy Riot, who were convicted in 2012 on hooliganism charges and expressed hope that charges would be dropped against the journalists covering the Greenpeace action at Gazprom's Prirazlomnaya platform in the Barents Sea in 2013.

I was pleased to learn that on 23 December the members of Pussy Riot were released from prison.

On **9 January** I issued a public statement expressing concern over the sentence handed down to journalist Aksana Panova, founder and former chief editor of the Ura.ru and chief editor of Znak.com news agency in Yekaterinburg, of 300,000 rubles on charges of extortion as well as a two-year ban on practicing journalism.

On 14 January I received a response from the authorities noting that the criminal investigation of Panova's case was conducted in full compliance with existing legislation and had no correlation to her role as a journalist.

I was pleased to learn about an appeals court ruling of 7 May lifting the ban on Panova's professional work in the media and issued public statement on **8 May** welcoming this decision.

On **15 January** I wrote to the authorities conveying concern about the refusal to grant a visa and the subsequent decision barring David Satter, a well-known US journalist and adviser to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, from entering the Russian Federation for five years for an administrative violation of the rules on entering and staying in the country.

On 17 January I received a reply from the Russian Foreign Ministry stating that Satter was barred entry to the country by a court decision based on non-compliance with established visa procedures.

On **5 February** I issued a public statement expressing concern about the exclusion of the independent television station Dozhd by a number of major cable and satellite operators. I noted that both the Prosecutor's Office and Roskomnadzor, the federal telecommunications regulator, investigated Dozhd's activities but found no legal grounds for sanctions.

On 11 February I received a letter from the authorities informing me that the exclusion of Dozhd came as a result of a voluntary decision by privately owned media operators acting in response to their audience. I will continue following this case closely.

In the same letter of 11 February the authorities noted that my Office did not react to a 29 January briefing by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton in Kyiv, to which several Russian journalists were denied entry.

On **19 February** I replied to the authorities stating that my mandate does not necessitate intervention when it comes to the public relations policies of international organizations, such as the EU. At the same time, I fully agreed that journalists should have equal access to all public events.

On **27 March** I wrote to Supreme Court Chair Vyacheslav Lebedev and issued a public statement welcoming the court's decision of 19 March to reinstate Rosbalt news agency's certificate of registration as a mass media outlet.

On **31 March** I wrote to the authorities expressing concern regarding the detention of Valery Badmaev, the editor of the Sovremennaya Kalmykia newspaper and the confiscation of the

newspaper's latest edition. Badmaev was released the next day, however the newspaper's print run has not been returned. I expressed hope that this incident would be thoroughly investigated and asked for more information on the case.

On 19 May I received a response from the Investigative Committee informing me that the newspaper's edition was confiscated for allegedly containing extremist materials and that Badmaev was fined by the administrative court for insulting police officers during the confiscation. The investigation into the newspaper's content apparently has not been completed.

On **3 April** I wrote to the authorities expressing concern regarding the denial of entry to Russia of three crew members from Ukraine's Channel 5. I reminded the authorities that OSCE participating States should not hinder the work of foreign journalists and asked for more information on the case.

On **23 April** I issued a public statement expressing extreme concern about the decision of the State Duma to adopt the amendments to the law "On information, information technologies and on protection of information" and calling on the President to veto these and other attempts to restrict free expression and free media. I said that, if enforced, the proposed amendments would curb free expression and freedom of social media, as well as seriously inhibit the right of citizens to freely receive and disseminate alternative information and express critical views.

Unfortunately on 5 May the President of the Russian Federation signed the amendments into law.

I was also disappointed to learn that on 23 April and 5 May respectively, the State Duma adopted and the President signed amendments to legislation criminalizing speech glorifying Nazism and dissemination of false information on Soviet Union actions during World War II, an issue on which I have previously expressed concern. See <http://www.osce.org/fom/103121>

On **20 May** I wrote to the authorities regarding the May 17 detention of Yurii Mamon and Dmitriy Podenko, journalists from ICTV who were reportedly detained in Belgorod oblast and interrogated by the Federal Security Service officers for more than 17 hours. I urged the authorities to abstain from interfering in the work of foreign journalists and asked for more information on the case.

On **5 June** I issued a public statement expressing concern about the detention of media freedom defender Anna Sharogradskaya, Director of the Regional Press Institute, who was barred from flying to the United States and held for several hours at the Pulkovo airport in Saint Petersburg without charges brought against her. All her files and electronic devices were seized.

On **10 June** I issued a public statement welcoming the sentences handed down to five people for the murder of journalist Anna Politkovskaya in 2006. I called for the investigation to continue to bring the masterminds to justice.

Serbia

On 29 November I received a letter from Slavka Draskovic, Director of the Serbian Government's Office for the Diaspora, regarding the pressure on the Serbian minority in Croatia and further enhancement of hate speech in the Croatian media.

On **12 December** I informed Draskovic that, although my Office closely monitors developments regarding hate speech, such content related issues should be dealt with by a national judicial process.

On **13 December** I issued a public statement expressing my concern about the blocking of access to online media content. Investigative news stories were deleted from some media websites after they were hacked. An article by journalist Miodrag Sovilj was removed from numerous websites, including the website of the Centre for Investigative Journalism of Serbia and Autonomija.info. I urged authorities to do their utmost to protect the culture of free Internet that exists in the country.

On **16 December** I wrote to the authorities regarding an attack on journalists from B92 and Prva TV in Bački Gračac in the municipality of Odžaci. I welcomed the fact that Minister of Justice Nikola Selaković condemned the incident and called for a full investigation and prosecution of those responsible. In my letter I joined the call to investigate these incidents.

On **14 January** I issued a public statement welcoming the arrests made in the case of the murder of journalist Slavko Ćuruvija in 1999. I also reminded the authorities that the killings of journalists Dada Vujasinović in 1994 and Milan Pantić in 2001 remain unsolved and urged the continued investigation of these cases in order to bring those responsible to justice. I welcome the fact that the prosecution has raised indictments for the murder of Slavko Ćuruvija.

On **22 January** I wrote to the authorities to request additional information on an incident in which police officers allegedly entered the home of Lily Lynch, a journalist and editor of Balkanist.net, in the middle of the night for questioning. I expressed my trust that authorities would carefully investigate this case.

On **27 May** I issued a public statement to express my concern about a worrying trend of online censorship and urged the authorities to nurture uncensored debate on issues of public interest, especially in times of crisis, such as the current situation with flooding in the region. I also brought to light the detention and police interrogation of persons for allegedly spreading panic. I stated that arresting individuals because of their blogs, comments or other written content is not acceptable. I urged the authorities to put an end to this trend and stop interfering with the work of online media outlets.

On **2 June** I spoke with Prime Minister Aleksander Vučić regarding my statement and the issue of online censorship and informed him that the trend of removing websites and blocking online resources and comments must be reversed. He assured me that he and his government will tackle these issues. Prime Minister Vučić and I agreed to meet at the earliest possible time in order to discuss these and other media related issues.

On 5 June RTV Mladenovac journalist Dragan Nikolic was interviewed by the police because of a post on Facebook, allegedly insulting and damaging reputation and dignity of public

figures and on the weekend of 1 June the website of Pescanik was attacked and unavailable. My Office stands ready to provide assistance to improve the current media situation.

Slovenia

On **27 February** I wrote to Foreign Minister Karl Erjavec to express concern about criminal charges that have been brought against Anuška Delić, an investigative journalist for the daily newspaper Delo in Ljubljana, for revealing classified information leaked from the National Intelligence and Security Agency, SOVA.

I also noted the case of Dejan Kaloh, owner and director of the web portal Politikis, who was also investigated by police for allegedly revealing classified information.

I received a reply dated 7 April from Minister Erjavec assuring me that the case of Delić would be decided by an independent and impartial court. I will continue to follow Delić's case.

I was also informed that the State Prosecutor had dismissed criminal proceedings against Kaloh.

Spain

On **1 April** I issued a public statement expressing concern about violence and intimidation by police against journalists covering demonstrations in Madrid on 29 March. According to media reports, journalists who clearly identified themselves as such were attacked and prevented from taking photographs or gathering information by police officers.

I called on the authorities to safeguard journalists when reporting on public demonstrations and to begin an investigation of these attacks.

On 15 May I received a reply from the authorities in which they fully agreed that any attempt to intimidate or attack journalists is unacceptable. They also informed me that, according to a report prepared by the Ministry of Interior, police officers had beaten journalists who had not identified themselves in an attempt to arrest violent protestors. They assured me of their commitment to protecting free expression and media freedom.

Sweden

On 6 January I issued a public statement expressing my concern about an attack on journalist PeO Warring, editor-in-chief of Swedish newspaper Eskilstuna-Kuriren. I called on the authorities to swiftly and thoroughly investigate the incident.

Switzerland

On **21 February** I issued a public statement voicing my concern about a criminal case initiated on the basis of a 9 October 2012 article about drug sales, in which journalist Nina Jecker was subsequently ordered to reveal the identity of her sources. The order was upheld by the Federal Court on 31 January.

I called on authorities to protect journalists' right to keep sources confidential and to bear in mind the possible consequences this case could have on media freedom in the country.

The lawyer for the Basler Zeitung newspaper, in which the article was first published, said that the case will be filed with the European Court of Human Rights. I will continue to monitor progress on the case.

I was pleased to learn that on 23 May a regional court in the canton of Neuchâtel affirmed the search of the home and seizure of reporting material, including a computer, of photographer Ludovic Rocchi, as illegal.

Law enforcement authorities searched Rocchi's home in August 2013 and a court held the search unjustified a month later. I issued a public statement at that time noting the first court's decision as a positive sign for protection of journalists' sources.

Tajikistan

On **26 December** I issued a public statement condemning the arrest and beating of Abdurakhim Shukurov, a camera operator working for the Ozodagon News Agency, by law enforcement officials. I urged the authorities to take all steps necessary to prevent future arbitrary arrests of journalists.

Although local authorities said that Shukurov would be held for several days, he was released the same day.

On **26 February** I issued a public statement voicing my concern over a 25 February civil court decision requiring journalist Olga Tutubalina to pay damages for defamation to three plaintiffs who claimed to have suffered "physical and mental suffering" even though they were not named in her article for the Asia Plus news website.

I pointed out that this case sets a dangerous precedent that could stifle public debate and dissuade journalists from critical reporting.

I was disappointed to learn that on 30 April a Dushanbe city court upheld the ruling against Tutubalina. My Office will continue to follow developments in the case.

On **11 June** I issued a public statement urging the authorities to ensure unfettered access to the Internet after many service providers once again blocked access to YouTube. I said it was the government's responsibility to ensure Tajik citizens have unrestricted access and officials should indicate why it has been blocked, as it was during periods of time in 2012 and 2013.

On **18 June** I wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Aslov Sirodjidin and issued a public statement to express my concern about the disappearance of Alexander Sodiqov a blogger and contributor to Global Voices, the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst (The John Hopkins University) and the Eurasia Daily Monitor (Jamestown Foundation) focusing on politics in Central Asia.

According to a public statement on 17 June issued by the Department of the State Committee for National Security in the Badakhshan Mountainous Autonomous Region, Sodiqov was

detained on 16 June in Khorog. Despite media reports of his release, his whereabouts remain unknown. The authorities in their statement suspected Sodiqov of spying for an unspecified foreign country. His employer, the University of Exeter, as well as Sodiqov's co-researcher, however, confirmed that he is in Tajikistan conducting research on conflict prevention methods for the University.

I asked the authorities to provide information on the whereabouts of Sodiqov and the circumstances of his disappearance.

Turkey

On **10 January** I warned in a public statement that blocking services of the video sharing website Vimeo, which was upheld on 9 January by the Criminal Court of Peace, further limits free expression and media freedom in the country. I noted that more than 30,000 websites are inaccessible for home users in Turkey and stated that the Internet Law has become an additional tool to silence critical voices online and requires urgent and thorough reform.

On **17 January** I issued a public statement calling for justice to be served in the case of Hrant Dink, a prominent Armenian-Turkish journalist whose murderers are still at large seven years after his death. I asked authorities to double their efforts to find the perpetrators and noted the ongoing retrial surrounding his death, following a ruling by the Supreme Court of Appeals in May 2013 acknowledging a criminal conspiracy to silence the journalist.

On **20 January** I wrote to Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu to express concern about pending amendments to the Internet Law, also known as Law No. 5651, that will enable authorities to remove content they disagree with. I recalled that even without these amendments the current law severely restricts freedom of expression and the citizens' right to access information and reiterated the need for fundamental reform of the law. I informed the Minister that my Office would provide a brief assessment of the amendments.

On **28 January** I forwarded to Minister Davutoğlu an assessment of the draft amendments to Law No 5651, commissioned by my Office, asking that it be taken into consideration during debates on the issue in Parliament.

(See Legal reviews)

On **31 January** I issued a public statement calling for the amendments to the Internet Law to respect media freedom and the right to freedom of expression and warned that, if adopted, the new measures would place a disproportionate burden on Internet service and hosting providers. I also expressed concern about the right of the Telecommunications Communications Presidency (TIB) to request and collect data on Internet users without judicial oversight. I asked again that the concerns outlined in the assessment commissioned by my Office be considered by the authorities and called for an open and broad public discussion with all stakeholders. I also repeated my Office's readiness to assist in bringing the Internet Law in line with OSCE commitments on free expression and media freedom.

On **7 February** I publicly condemned the deportation of journalist Mahir Zeynalov, an Azerbaijani national working for the daily Today's Zaman, for two of his tweets considered inappropriate by the authorities. I called for his immediate release and for all charges against him to be dropped.

On **14 February** I wrote to President Abdullah Gül asking him to veto the new Internet Law and return it to Parliament for further deliberations. I noted that the new law contained several highly worrisome provisions that enable authorities to block free online discourse on issues of public interest. I noted again the lack of public consultations and the concerns voiced by many national and international media experts about the new law.

On **17 February** I issued a public statement in which I repeated my call to President Gül to veto the Internet Law and initiate public consultation on the law.

On 28 February the President approved the new Internet Law.

On 11 March I received a reply from the Office of President Gül informing me that the President approved the new law with an assurance from the government that the most contentious articles within the bill would be immediately revised. The letter also informed me that the government had presented revisions to the Parliamentary commission, following the President's approval, and these revisions were passed by the Parliament on 25 February.

On **10 March** I publicly welcomed the release of journalist Tuncay Özkan, the former owner of Kanal Biz television station arrested in 2008, and urged swift, fair and transparent trials for all imprisoned journalists in Turkey. I noted that the life sentence in solitary confinement handed down to Özkan in August 2013 was of unprecedented length and severity and a grave attack on free expression and free media.

On **21 March** I issued a public statement calling for the immediate lifting of a Twitter ban in the country enacted by three court rulings and a prosecutorial decision by the TIB. I called on the authorities to vacate the court decisions that allow the blocking of Twitter, adding that the government should protect and encourage pluralistic discourse both offline and online. I noted that while technology would always find ways to circumvent such bans, in the short run such prohibitory approaches from the highest authorities threaten the free flow of information and citizens' fundamental right to freely express themselves.

On **27 March** I publicly called for an end to the censorship of social media platforms in Turkey, following the move by telecommunications regulator TIB to block YouTube. I said that by blocking access to social media platforms Turkey is deliberately disregarding the fundamental rights to free expression and media freedom. I repeated my call to the authorities to preserve media freedom both online and offline and to immediately restore access to Youtube and reinstate Twitter services without delay.

On **8 May** in a public statement I welcomed the release of journalists Füsun Erdoğan and Bayram Namaz. They were arrested in 2006, convicted and sentenced to life in prison in November 2013 on charges that they were senior members of a Marxist organization banned under the Anti-Terror Law. I repeated my call for the release of all journalists from prison convicted under that law.

On **30 May** I publicly welcomed the ruling made on 29 May by the Turkish Constitutional Court that the blanket ban on YouTube violated individual rights of Internet users and freedom of speech and called for the immediate implementation of the decision by the telecommunications regulator, TIB.

On **18 June** my Office published an updated table of imprisoned journalists in Turkey. The document, available on the website of my Office at <https://www.osce.org/fom/119921>, shows that there are currently 22 journalists in prison.

I commend the fact that the number of imprisoned journalists has dropped significantly in the last three years. In April 2011, when my Office published the table for the first time, 95 journalists were in prison. I also express my appreciation to the authorities, including the Ministry of Justice, for continuously sharing their information with my Office on the status of imprisoned journalists.

I hope that soon all journalists will be freed in Turkey, and I repeat my calls to the authorities to carry out the much needed reform of the laws that allow for imprisonment for journalistic work, including the Anti-Terror Law and the Criminal Code.

My Office stands ready to assist Turkey in this very important endeavour.

Turkmenistan

On **20 January** in a letter to Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov, I noted reports that a number of legislative changes had reduced criminal sanctions for libel. I was also pleased to note that the new criminal code allows for monetary penalties as an alternative to prison and that minor cases of libel and insult have been moved from the Criminal Code to the Code of Administrative Wrongdoings.

Though these legislative changes do not fully decriminalize libel, I see them as positive first steps toward the total eradication of criminal defamation. I was also pleased to note recent reforms in media legislation that will improve Internet access and affordability in the country.

My Office continues the close co-operation with the Centre in Ashgabat in identifying suitable international experts in this field for a workshop on online media legislation planned for the summer in Ashgabat.

Ukraine

On **29 November** I issued a public statement condemning the attack on Dmitry Gnyp and Yakov Lyubchich from Hromadske.tv who sustained injuries and damage to their equipment while reporting on the demonstrations in Kyiv. I also condemned attacks in Zhitomir on Vlad Puchich, Chief Editor of “20 Minutes” newspaper, who sustained various injuries.

On **2 December** I wrote to the former Chairperson-in-Office and Foreign Minister and issued a public statement expressing concern about the magnitude of violence against members of the media at the demonstrations in Kyiv. In most of the cases, the beatings were conducted by the law enforcement officers who attacked journalists, regardless of their identification as members of the press. I called on the authorities to take urgent action to halt the violence and to swiftly launch investigations into these attacks.

I received a reply to this letter from the Ministry of Interior on 4 February stating that from November 21 to January 25 law enforcement units received 77 reports of “unlawful acts” against journalists. The Ministry also informed me of the production and distribution of press vests for media representatives as a preventive measure for possible conflict between police officers and journalists during public events.

On 20 December I received replies from the Administration of the President and the General Prosecutor's Office to my letter of 23 October regarding the attacks on several journalists. I was assured that due consideration was being given to these cases and that investigations would be carried out when incidents were reported.

On **23 December** I wrote to the authorities about attacks on Yuriy Kot, a journalist with Inter TV channel and Svetlana Malitskaya, a photojournalist with Internet-based newspaper "Dorozhnyi Kontrol," in Kyiv on 15 and 16 December, respectively. I also raised concern regarding the reported denial of entry to Ukraine to David Kakulia, a journalist with Georgian Rustavi-2 TV channel, on 20 December as well as law enforcement's reported attempt to deport journalists from Georgia's Tabula TV for allegedly participating in public protests in Kyiv.

On 22 January and 20 February I received replies from the authorities stating that law enforcement had initiated criminal investigations into the attacks on Kot and Malitskaya. I was informed that Kakulia was banned from entering Ukraine for a period of two years for "activities aimed at harming state security of Ukraine." The Security Service had no information about the expulsion of the Tabula TV journalists.

On **25 December** I issued a public statement condemning the brutal attack on Tatyana Chernovil, a journalist with Ukrainskaya Pravda, in which she sustained serious injuries. I called on the authorities to conduct a swift and thorough investigation to bring those responsible to justice.

On **16 January** I issued a public statement expressing concern about the amendments to the Criminal Code adopted by the Verkhovna Rada that recriminalized defamation, provided additional protection for public officials from critical speech and introduced criminal responsibility for distributing extremist materials through the media and the Internet. I called on then President Yanukovich to veto these legislative amendments.

Subsequently, my Office contributed to the OSCE/ODIHR Opinion on Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine upon request of the authorities.

On **28 January** I welcomed the repeal of these provisions and called on the Verkhovna Rada to fully revoke all regressive provisions limiting media freedom.

On **22 January** I wrote to the authorities regarding journalists' safety and issued a public statement regarding cases of violence against more than 30 journalists from various media injured while fulfilling their professional duties during the public protests in Kyiv. In some cases, journalists were reportedly specifically targeted by law enforcement despite clear identification as members of the media. I called on authorities to take urgent action to stop all violence against members of the media.

On **19 February** I issued a public statement condemning the violence in Kyiv during which Vesti journalist Vyacheslav Veremyi was killed and many other journalists were injured. I repeated my call to the authorities to ensure journalists' safety and refrain from targeting members of the media.

I was pleased to learn about the 13 June General Prosecutor's report on completion of the investigation into Veremyi's murder. Reportedly, one suspect has been arrested and seven others are being sought.

On **26 February** I wrote to Oleksandr Turchinov, then Acting President of Ukraine and Chair of the Verkhovna Rada, and issued a public statement expressing my concern about an initiative by a group of members of the Verkhovna Rada to ban the broadcast and rebroadcast of certain television and radio programs produced in countries not party to the European Convention on Transfrontier Television. I emphasized that banning broadcasts is an extreme form of censorship and called on the authorities to withdraw the proposed decree.

On **28 February** I issued a public statement expressing concern about the presence of armed people who had taken control of access to national TV and radio channel Krym in Simferopol.

On **3 March** in a public statement I urged all responsible parties to stop the harassment of journalists following reports of interference in the work of journalists in Simferopol. I also condemned attacks on journalists in Donetsk and Kharkiv in the presence of police who did not intervene.

On **7 March** I issued a public statement following a visit to Ukraine and meetings with media associations and local journalists in Simferopol and Kyiv, warning of the severity of the media freedom crisis in Ukraine. I called on all those responsible to stop the information war, ensure journalists' safety in Crimea and elsewhere and immediately start to deescalate the situation. I stated that the Tatar journalists at the state broadcaster Krym were under political pressure from the broadcaster's administration and that access to official information from local authorities was only being provided "loyal" journalists.

During my meetings in Kyiv with senior government officials I stressed that there must be no impunity for attacks against journalists and brought up the murder of Vesti journalist Vyacheslav Veremyi. I also expressed hope that the public service broadcasting law would be adopted in order to establish a politically and financially independent and impartial broadcaster, improve access to information and enhance the regulator.

(See Visits and participation in events)

On **8 March** in a public statement I condemned the continued closure of a number television stations and attacks on journalists in Crimea. I again called on those responsible to re-establish law and order in Crimea and to bring an end to the deterioration of the free media environment.

On **10 March** I wrote a letter to Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrii Deshchytsia regarding the denial of entry to the country for members of Russian media outlets. I asked the authorities to abstain from creating obstacles barring country access to foreign journalists seeking entry in their professional capacities.

On **10 March** in a public statement I called for the immediate release of Oles Kromplyas and Olena Maksimenko, journalists with the Glavkom and Ukrainskiy Tizhden news portals respectively, who were kidnapped on 9 March near Armyansk.

On **11 March** I publicly expressed concern about the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council's demands that cable operators in Ukraine stop transmitting Russian television channels Rossiya 24, ORT, RTR Planeta and NTV-Mir. I said that banning programming without a legal basis is a form of censorship and national security concerns should not be used at the expense of media freedom.

On **19 March** I wrote to Acting President Turchinov and issued a public statement expressing outrage about the attack on the acting President of the National Television Company of Ukraine, Aleksandr Panteleymonov, by a group of members of the Ukrainian political party "Svoboda," forcing him to resign. I stressed the especially serious nature of the attack given that a number of the assailants represent not only the legislative branch but are also members of the freedom of speech and information committee of the Verkhovna Rada.

I also mentioned the 17 March case in which a group stormed the state television office in the Chernigov region and forced director Arkadiy Bilibayev to resign. I called on the authorities to launch swift and transparent investigations and bring all those responsible to justice.

On **28 March** I issued a public statement welcoming the Verkhovna Rada's adoption of amendments to legislation that improve implementation of the 2011 law on access to information and broaden the scope of information accessible to the public.

I was pleased to learn that on 1 April the authorities reconsidered the decision regarding the denial of entry for Yuriy Barabash, whose case I raised in a 16 July letter.

On **3 April** I wrote to the authorities conveying concern regarding the denial of entry to Ukraine for members of Russian media outlets. I reiterated my call to abstain from denying entry to members of the foreign media.

On **7 April** I wrote to the authorities to convey concern about the 4 April murder of Vasily Sergiyenko, a contributor to Nadrossia newspaper in Cherkasskaya Oblast. I asked the authorities to swiftly investigate this murder and provide more information on the case.

On **8 April** I expressed my concern about the attacks on journalists and their offices in eastern Ukraine on 7 April. I urged law enforcement agencies to do everything in their power to ensure safe working conditions for journalists and prevent acts of violence against the media.

On **9 April** I wrote to the authorities conveying concern regarding the denial of entry to Ukraine for members of Russian media.

On **16 April** at the end of my three-day visit to Ukraine, in a public statement I alerted OSCE participating States about the deterioration of journalists' safety in the country. I stressed that journalists are under attack, both physically and as part of ongoing psychological warfare. I also mentioned that journalists in Crimea face additional problems including media re-registration, possible eviction from the region for failure to change citizenship, vicious labelling, threats and denial of access to public information.

(See Visits and participation in events)

On **17 April** I issued a public statement condemning the seizure of the television tower in Sloviansk in eastern Ukraine and the subsequent replacement of Ukrainian channels with channels originating in the Russian Federation.

On **22 April** I issued a public statement expressing deep concern about new cases of detention and attacks on a number of domestic and international journalists in eastern Ukraine.

On **24 April** I issued a public statement calling attention to the continuing attacks on journalists and deterioration of the media freedom environment in eastern Ukraine.

On **25 April** I wrote to Arsen Avakov, Acting Minister of Internal Affairs and issued a press release regarding the disappearance of Julia Shustraya and Mikhail Pudovkin, a journalist and cameraman with LifeNews. I also expressed concern about the 24 April disappearance of Stepan Chirich, a producer with the NTV channel, in Dnepropetrovsk oblast.

On **29 April** I issued a public statement denouncing new cases of kidnapping and attacks on journalists, the takeover of a regional television station in Donetsk and the illegal switching of Ukrainian television and radio broadcasts to those originating in the Russian Federation. I also noted a 28 April attack on Inter channel by protesters in Kyiv demanding that the broadcast of a Russian television series be stopped.

On **2 May** in a public statement I renewed my call for all parties to respect media freedom following new report of intimidation of journalists, disappearances and a violent takeover of a regional television station in Luhansk by armed group.

On **9 May** I issued a public statement denouncing 15 new incidents of kidnapping, assaults on journalists and attacks on the broadcasting infrastructure within the last week.

On **14 May** I welcomed the adoption of a public broadcasting law as a significant step toward institutionally reinforcing media freedom in the country. I was pleased to note that recommendations made by my Office in a review of the law's draft were taken into account by the Verkhovna Rada deputies.

On **19 May** I wrote to Acting Minister of Internal Affairs Arsen Avakov regarding the arrest of LifeNews journalists Marat Saichenko and Oleg Sidyakin who were detained by the Ukrainian military forces on 18 May and reportedly handed over to law enforcement authorities. I expressed hope the journalists will be released and that authorities will thoroughly investigate the case. I was pleased to learn that on 24 May both journalists were released.

On **19 May** I also issued a public statement calling on all parties to stop targeting media professionals covering the crisis. I denounced new cases of journalists' detainment and denials of entry into Ukraine.

On **25 May** I issued a public statement mourning the killing of Italian photojournalist Andrea Rocchelli and his Russian assistant, Andrey Mironov, in eastern Ukraine, noting that such deaths are horrible reminders that not enough is being done to protect journalists. I called on the authorities to swiftly and thoroughly investigate the circumstances of their deaths and to hold those responsible accountable.

On **30 May** I issued a public statement condemning new acts of violence, detentions, blocking of television channels and refusing entry into Ukraine for members of the media.

On **3 June** I issued a public statement condemning the continuing attacks on and mistreatment of members of the media in eastern and southern Ukraine following the detention and beating of the journalist and producer with the Centre for Journalistic Investigations in Simferopol and the raid on the offices of the Donbass newspaper and Vecherniy Donetsk by a group of armed men.

I appreciate receiving a letter from the authorities on 13 June with detailed updates on investigations undertaken in several matters raised during this reporting period. I look forward to receiving the results of these investigations.

On **17 June** I issued a public statement mourning the killing of Russian journalist Igor Kornelyuk in eastern Ukraine, noting that his death is yet another horrible reminder that not enough is being done to protect journalists. I called on the authorities to swiftly and thoroughly investigate the circumstances of his death and to hold those responsible accountable. I also expressed deep concern about the deteriorating media freedom environment, denounced the latest incidents and again called on all parties to let journalists do their job in a free and safe manner.

I welcome the immediate reaction of President Petro Poroshenko, who instructed law enforcement authorities to thoroughly investigate the circumstances of Kornelyuk's death.

I was also deeply saddened to hear about the killing of Anton Voloshin, a sound engineer, who was earlier reported missing as a result of the same incident.

United States

On **3 June** I issued a public statement expressing disappointment that the United States Supreme Court declined to consider an appeal by a New York Times reporter, James Risen, who is being compelled to testify in a criminal case against a government employee accused of passing secrets. I initially wrote to U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder in July 2013 to express concern about attempts to force Risen to testify about a source in a theft of secret information case – which run counter to published Justice Department guidelines that compel reporters to testify only as an extraordinary measure and a last resort.

I reiterated my call for a shield law to protect journalists from revealing sources in court cases and also asked the Department of Justice to refrain from compelling Risen to testify at trial.

On **16 June** I wrote to the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission to present a legal review commissioned by my Office on proposed net neutrality rules and issued a public statement on the issue. I noted that the proposed rules would allow broadband providers to discriminate against content which may conflict with their political, economic or other interests and that this would contradict international standards, OSCE commitments on free expression and free media and longstanding U.S. First Amendment principles. I also expressed my hope that the recommendations included in the review will be taken into consideration by the FCC when adopting the rules. I will continue monitoring the issue.

Uzbekistan

On **30 January** I issued a public statement on the disappearance of photojournalists Umida Akhmedova and her son, Timur Karpov, who were detained by police on 29 January. I also wrote to Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov requesting his assistance in locating the two journalists.

On 31 January my Office received word that during their period of detention, the two journalists had been ordered to pay a fine for their participation in an unsanctioned campaign. They were then released. On 23 February my Office received confirmation from the Permanent Mission of Uzbekistan to the OSCE that they had been fined for administrative offenses.

On **28 May** I wrote to President Islam Karimov requesting a presidential pardon for Solijon Abdurakhmanov, a journalist who has served six years of a 10-year prison term. I expressed concern that his current conditions in prison could lead to a rapid deterioration of his health, given his age and numerous medical problems.

Communiqués and other documents issued

In addition to public statements I issued four Communiqués, a Memorandum and a Report on specific issues related to freedom of the media and freedom of expression that require additional attention by OSCE participating States.

On blocking television channels

On **27 March** I issued a Communiqué on the blocking of television channels. I called on participating States to refrain from blocking media to avoid arbitrary and politically motivated actions which could impede media pluralism. Media freedom is dependent on a healthy, vibrant and competitive media landscape that includes a variety of voices and opinions. The document is available at www.osce.org/fom/116888

On denial of entry of journalists from one OSCE participating State to another

On **2 April** I issued a Communiqué on the denial of entry of journalists to OSCE participating States. I reminded participating States that the Helsinki Final Act includes travel facilitation as one of the commitments agreed upon by participating States to improve working conditions for journalists throughout the OSCE region. While I recognize the need for participating States to control their borders, I have serious concerns about undue travel limitations and their effect on the free flow of information and free media. The document is available at www.osce.org/fom/117092

On propaganda in times of conflict

On **15 April** I issued a Communiqué on propaganda in times of conflict. Propaganda and the deterioration of media freedom are a dangerous mixture that often serves to escalate and fuel conflict. To address this alarming trend, the Communiqué presents the following recommendations:

- Stop manipulating media; stop information and psychological wars.
- Ensure media plurality and free media as an antidote to propaganda.
- Refrain from introducing new restrictions; existing laws can deal with extreme propaganda.
- Invest in media literacy so citizens can make informed choices.
- Reform state media into genuine public service broadcasting.

The document is available at www.osce.org/fom/117701

On the “right to be forgotten” and its possible implications for investigative journalism and media freedom

On **16 May** I issued a Communiqué following a ruling by The European Union Court of Justice, that companies with search engines have an obligation to delete links to websites that publish "inadequate, irrelevant or no longer relevant" data; the so called “right to be forgotten.” I noted that this decision might negatively affect access to information and could stifle the role of or diminish instruments available to investigative journalists. Undue restrictions on media and journalistic activities are unacceptable regardless of distribution platforms and technologies. The document is available at www.osce.org/fom/118632

Memorandum of representatives of the Russian and Ukrainian media organizations on the situation in and around Ukraine

On **19 May** I organized and hosted a round-table discussion in **Vienna** among representatives of the Russian Union of Journalists, the Independent Media Trade Union of Ukraine and the National Union of the Journalists of Ukraine. The participants signed a Memorandum in which they outlined practical steps to improve the safety of journalists and also called for their respective governments to stop manipulating the media and engaging in propaganda. The Memorandum was sent to the Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and Andrii Deshchytsia, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. It is available at <http://www.osce.org/fom/118692>

Report on media freedom in Ukraine

On **23 May** I presented a 14-page report on the media freedom situation in Ukraine produced by my Office. The report covers events in Ukraine occurring between 28 November 2013 and 23 May including over 300 cases of violence against members of the media, including murder, physical assaults, kidnappings, detentions, imprisonments, threat and acts of intimidation. It lists a number of cases in which journalists’ equipment was confiscated and/or destroyed. The report also includes a number of cases of repeated and illegal switching off of television broadcasts and reviews the difficulties of properly addressing the issue of propaganda in times of conflict.

The full text of the report is available at: <https://www.osce.org/fom/118990>

Projects and activities since the last report

Activities with international organizations

International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia Joint Statement

On **17 May** marking International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHO-T), I subscribed to the text of a joint statement (in as much as it refers to the areas covered by the scope of my mandate) “Free expression and association key to eliminating Homophobia and Transphobia” together with UN human rights experts, the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights and the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights. This declaration expresses concern about the existence and recent adoption of laws in several countries that ban the dissemination of information about sexual orientation or gender identity issues, among other things. The document is available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14602&LangID=E>

Legal reviews

Albania

On **6 December** I provided Minister Harito with a report on “recommendations and examples for digital switch-over in Albania, especially regarding ownership and management of transmission facilities” commissioned by my Office and authored by legal expert Katrin Nyman-Metcalf. The report provides a number of recommendations and key considerations for the authorities including:

- An important feature related to ownership and management of digital broadcasting transmission infrastructure (multiplexes) is that the role of operating the network is separated from the role of the broadcaster (content provider).
- Licences can be issued as frequency licences or broadcasting licences (or both). Channels can be selected by the regulator (or government) or by the multiplex owner. In the latter case there needs to be regulatory oversight to ensure plurality and diversity.
- A number of factors, specific for each country, need to be taken into consideration when deciding the best structure of ownership and management of multiplexes. This includes size of the country, current ownership of the broadcasters and transmission facilities, how people receive broadcasting, etc.
- Rules on how multiplexes shall be used, how access can be ensured and similar matters are more important for plurality and diversity than the ownership as such. Regardless of the ownership structure, appropriate legislation is needed on access and competition issues so that the multiplex does not act as a bottleneck that makes it impossible for content providers to reach the audience.

- Access to multiplexes is an essential facility in order to be able to compete in the broadcasting content sector – without access it will be impossible to provide content. Thus, the matter is essential also from the viewpoint of plurality and diversity of content.
- A measure to avoid abuse of dominant position is to have legislation that limits how many multiplexes one operator can own and operate.
- It must be monitored that spectrum allocated is also used, to prevent spectrum hoarding. Unused spectrum shall be taken back and re-allocated.
- Multiplex owners can be subject to must-carry provisions for public service broadcasting and other free-to-air content.
- It is legitimate to impose price controls or other requirements concerning commercial conditions on multiplexes to avoid that they abuse their dominant position. However, such controls must not be too restrictive as any private firms operating multiplexes must be allowed to conduct their business according to normal business principles to as large an extent as possible (including making a profit).
- The use of the digital dividend can be made such that it provides an incentive for companies to invest in digitalisation.
- It is essential to have correct and up-to-date information on how people receive broadcasting, in order to know who shall be responsible for what in the digitalization process.

Armenia

On **28 March** I presented to the authorities a legal review commissioned by my Office on the draft amendments to the Civil Code concerning liability of media outlets for defamatory or insulting comments, especially when posted by anonymous users. While the draft law should be regarded as a good initiative for combating the dissemination of offensive statements, the review noted a number of critical points regarding the content of the proposed amendments that may pose a threat to protection of personal data and sets inappropriate timing requirements on media outlets with regard to removing defamatory or insulting comments. In general, the proposed amendments lack clarity and contain a certain degree of vagueness.

The legal review offered a number of recommendations to be taken into account when discussing proposed changes to the legislation to ensure the compliance with OSCE media freedom commitments and international standards.

The legal review is available at <http://www.osce.org/fom/116911>

Kyrgyzstan

On **23 April** I presented a legal review to the authorities on the amendments to Article 329 of the Criminal Code carried out by Dmitry Golovanov, a media law expert from Russia.

The review concluded that the amendments could result in disproportionate restrictions on freedom of expression by imposing criminal sanctions on false reporting of a crime to the

authorities and in the media. The review also found that the amendments create a *de facto* criminalization of defamation which contradicts the Kyrgyz Constitution. The expert recommended several significant changes in the amendments.

The full text of the legal review is available in Russian at: www.osce.org/ru/fom/117939

Lithuania

On **5 February** I presented Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas, a legal review commissioned by my Office on the Draft Law of the Republic of Lithuania amending the Title of Chapter XXII and Article 154 and Repealing Articles 155, 232 and 290 of the Criminal Code and the Draft Law of the Republic of Lithuania Amending Article 187 of the Code of Administrative Offences. In general, the review positively noted the impact of the proposed amendments on freedom of expression and media freedom. These include:

- Decriminalization of insult, including acts degrading the honour of judges and civil officials;
- Decriminalization of the crime of libellous accusation of commission of a serious or grave crime or in the media or in a publication;
- Restriction on the scope of criminal libel by abolishing liability for words that arouse contempt for this person or humiliate him or undermine trust;
- Abolishment of imprisonment for libel.

However, the review also noted that some aspects of the Defamation Law do not favour freedom of expression, including:

- No full decriminalization of libel;
- Retention of the penalty of administrative arrest for insulting public officials and bailiffs;
- Protection of public officials against insult is not explicitly restricted to the performance of their duties.

The legal review offers a number of recommendations on how to bring the proposed legislation in line with international standards and OSCE media freedom commitments.

The full text of legal review is available at: www.osce.org/fom/111060

Moldova

On **8 May** I presented Igor Corman, Chairman of the Parliament, a legal review commissioned by my Office regarding several proposed amendments to the Moldovan audiovisual legislation. It was encouraging that some of my concerns, raised during the March visit, especially with regard to the transparency of media ownership, were shared by the members of Parliament. However, apart from some minor improvements, the proposed provisions lack clarity, overlap each other and fail to reflect the interests of all stakeholders.

The review proposes a set of expert recommendations which, if taken into account, will help improve the media-freedom environment in Moldova to effectively address the existing challenges.

The full text of the legal review is available at: <http://www.osce.org/fom/118395>

Turkey

On **28 January** I presented to the authorities an initial assessment of the then draft amendments to Law No 5651, also known as the Internet Law of Turkey.

The document examined several amendments in light of their potential danger to freedom of expression and freedom of the media online, including the liability of hosting and access providers as well as blocking of Internet content. It examined in detail the proposed amendments on notification, on the liability of hosting providers and on the liability of access providers. It also assessed the formation of an Association of Access Providers. It explained the proposed amendments on the liability of mass use providers, on Article 8 containing sanctions and on Article 9 on the violation of individual rights and on privacy violations.

As a conclusion, the assessment stated that the new Internet Law, as with the original Internet Law adopted in 2007, continues to serve as a basis for blocking access to legitimate content. The new measures are not compatible with OSCE commitments and international standards on media freedom and freedom of expression and have the potential to significantly impact free expression, investigative journalism, the protection of journalists' sources and access to information over the Internet.

The full text of the legal review is available at: <http://www.osce.org/fom/110823>

Visits and participation in events

On **2 December** the Director presented a lecture on “legal conditions of freedom of the media for the sake of social progress: European experience and possible scenarios for the future” in **Kyiv** at a conference organized by the NGO StudRespublika.

On **3 December** I spoke at the conference, *Western Balkans: Highs and Lows*, organized by the Friends of Europe in **Brussels**.

On **6-7 December** I attended the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in **Kiev**.

On **9 December** my Office participated in a roundtable discussion in **Tirana** organized by the Albanian Media Institute and the OSCE Presence in Albania on the reform of the public broadcaster in Albania and spoke on “Public Service Broadcasting: European standards and models. Lessons learned from transition countries. What went right and what went wrong.”

On **10-11 December** I participated in the International Workshop on Freedom of Expression on the Internet in **Berlin** organized by the German Commission for UNESCO and the Hans Bredow Institut on the topic of protecting freedom of expression and other human rights online.

On **10-11 December** my Office participated in a roundtable in **Budapest** organized in cooperation by national media, the Infocommunications Authority and the Council of Europe to discuss issues related to public service broadcasting.

On **17 December** my Office participated in the conference in **Budapest** “Current and New Challenges in European Media Regulation” organized by the Council of Europe.

On **17 December** I participated in the conference in **Vilnius** “Civic responsible media cultivation and society right to know” organized by the Lithuanian Journalists’ Union and Ministry of Culture and spoke on journalist’s rights, safety and decriminalization of defamation.

On **20 December** my Office participated in an international conference on “Establishing dialogue between regulatory authorities and the media community in securing a pluralistic environment for new audiovisual media” held in **Kyiv** and organized by the OSCE Project Coordinator in Ukraine and the National Council of Ukraine on Television and Radio Broadcasting.

On **20 December** the Director moderated the annual roundtable devoted to the anniversary of the mass media law in Russia organized by the Faculty of Journalism at Lomonosov Moscow State University and held in **Moscow**.

On **20-21 January** the Principal Adviser participated in a roundtable discussion on “Freedom of Expression and Political-Electoral Communication” organized by the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression and held in **Madrid**.

On **21-22 January** my Office participated in the meetings of the Advisory Group created to develop OSCE/ODIHR Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders held in **Warsaw** and organized by ODIHR.

On **23-25 January** I gave a presentation on setting and monitoring human rights standards at the conference “Addressing implementation gaps: improving cooperation between global and regional human rights mechanisms” held in **London**, and organized by the NGO Wilton Park.

On **10-12 February** I visited **Skopje** at the request of the Minister of Information Society and Administration Ivo Ivanovski. The purpose of the visit was to discuss the media freedom situation in the country, in particular the newly adopted media laws and the conviction of journalist Tomislav Kezarovski.

On **19-20 February** my Office participated in an international partnership mission to **Kyiv**, together with the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, the Independent Media Trade Union of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Association of Press Publishers, the European and International Federations of Journalists, International Media Support, Open Society Foundation, WAN/IFRA, Article19 and Reporters Without Borders. The objective of the trip was to gather first-hand information about current press freedom violations in Ukraine to show solidarity with journalists at risk and to coordinate future activities in the country.

On **25-26 February** the Director and I participated in an expert meeting of the “Global Freedom of Expression and Information Project” organized by Columbia University and held

in **New York City** where I spoke on “litigating the free flow of information in Europe and Central Asia” and the Director spoke on media-freedom related case law in Central Asia.

On **27 February** I spoke on the demise of media freedom and presented an update of media developments in the OSCE region at a lecture organized by the Harriman Institute of Columbia University in **New York City**.

On **28 February – 1 March** the Principal Adviser gave a keynote address on freedom of expression at an international conference in **Vienna** on “Freedom of information under pressure” organized by the University of Vienna.

On **3-4 March** my Office participated in a meeting of the “Committee of experts on protection of journalism and safety of journalists” on the protection of journalists organized by the Council of Europe and held in **Strasbourg**.

On **4-7 March** I visited Ukraine to meet with parliamentary representatives and government officials, including Vice Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada Ruslan Koshulynskyi, Head of Committee on Freedom of Speech and Information of the Verkhovna Rada Mykola Tomenko, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Andrii Olefirov and Head of the General Prosecutor's Department of Supervision regarding the observance of laws by the interior forces Yuriy Sevruk. I also met with the media representatives in **Kyiv** and **Simferopol**.

On **11-12 March** the Principal Adviser gave a presentation on “Privacy, security and trust - how are regulators and policy makers responding to and managing expectations for data collection versus data use?” at the Telecommunications and Media Forum in **Brussels** organized by the International Institute of Communications.

On **13-14 March** I participated in the opening panel of the conference “Shaping the Digital Environment: Ensuring our Rights on the Internet” organized by the Austrian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe and held in **Graz**.

On **17-19 March** I visited **Chisinau** at the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to meet with authorities, representatives of the broadcasting regulator, public service broadcasters, including from the autonomous territorial unit of Gagauzia, civil society and journalists from both banks of the Dniester/Nistru River. Among other issues, we discussed issues related to lack of transparency in media ownership, concentration of the advertising market, the slow digital switchover process and a lack of public awareness about changes related to digitalization, as well as a weak and financially dependent public service broadcaster.

On **17-18 March** my Office participated in the first meeting of the Committee of Experts on the cross-border flow of Internet traffic organized by the Council of Europe and held in **Strasbourg**.

On **18-19 March** my Office participated in a conference in **Dushanbe** focusing on Tajikistan’s membership in the World Trade Organization, specifically in the areas of telecommunications and broadcasting, organized by the Ministry of Development and Trade and the OSCE Office in Tajikistan.

On **26-27 March** my Office attended a “National Seminar on Countering the Use of Internet for Terrorist purposes” in **Astana** organized by the Transnational Threats Department and the OSCE Centre in Astana.

On **27-28 March** my Office gave a presentation on children’s rights and free expression at a conference in **Dubrovnik** on “Growing with children’s rights” organized by the Council of Europe and the Croatian Ministry of Social Policy and Youth to implement the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2012-2015.

On **30 March** the Director of the Office and the Principal Adviser participated in the Milton Wolf Seminar organized by the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, the American Austrian Foundation and the Center for Global Communication Studies of the University of Pennsylvania on the topic “The Third Man Theme Revisited: Foreign Policies of the Internet in a time of Surveillance and Disclosure.” The Director spoke on “Information regimes and the future of the media” and the Principal Adviser provided an update on the media situation in Ukraine.

On **30-31 March** I attended and spoke at Cyber Dialogue 2014 on the topic "After Snowden, Wither Internet Freedom?" conference in **Toronto** organized by the Monk School of Global Affairs at the University of Toronto. My blog post for the conference, “It’s Time for a Magna Carta for the Web,” is available at cyberdialogue.ca.

On **31 March** my Office took part in the Central Asia Regional Heads of OSCE Field Operations Meeting in **Astana**.

On **9-10 April** my Office participated in discussions in **Brussels** on “Media freedom and media integrity” in EU enlargement countries organized by the European Commission.

On **14-16 April** I visited **Ukraine** to meet with journalists from Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odesa, Donetsk, Mykolayiv and Crimea. I also met the Acting Foreign Minister Andrii Deshchytsa and Deputy Interior Minister Mykola Velychkovych.

On **15 April** I attended a seminar in **Kyiv** on the safety of journalists organized by the Council of Europe Office in Ukraine and the Embassy of Canada in Ukraine.

On **28-29 April** my Office participated in a conference organized by the OSCE Chairmanship on counter-terrorism in **Interlaken** and gave a presentation on the implications that anti-terrorist legislation may have for freedom of expression, freedom of the media and freedom of information.

On **28-29 April** I participated in a panel discussion at the fourth Freedom Online Conference in **Tallinn** on “Free and Secure Internet for All.” Recommendations from the discussions were adopted at the conference, reaffirming the commitment of the 23 member countries to a set of common values related to Internet freedom.

On **5-6 May** I participated in the conference World Press Freedom Day 2014: Media Freedom for a Better Future in **Paris** in recognition of World Press Freedom Day on the media’s importance in development, the safety of journalists, the rule of law and the sustainability and integrity of journalism organized by UNESCO. While there I also launched, along with the three special rapporteurs on media freedom from the United

Nations, the Organization of American States and the African Commission on Human and People's rights, a joint declaration on the universality of the right to freedom of expression.

The joint declaration states clearly that legal restrictions on freedom of expression can never be justified by reference to local traditions, cultures or values and that certain forms of speech, such as political speech in its broader sense and opinions on religious and philosophical matters, should be protected according to a universal vision of freedom. The document is available at: <http://www.osce.org/fom/118298>

On **8-9 May** I participated in an "International seminar on the rule of law and justice" in **Istanbul** organized by the Yüksel Karkın Küçük law firm, where we discussed separation of powers, freedom of media and press and accountability of the government under the law and how those principles promote transparency and ensure stability in democratic nations.

On **12-14 May** my Office participated in the Human Dimension Seminar in **Warsaw** on "Improving OSCE effectiveness by enhancing its co-operation with relevant regional and international organisations" and spoke in Working Group Session IV on "Best Practices for Co-operation between the OSCE and Other Relevant Regional and International Organizations."

On **14 May** I participated in the conference "War and Peace in a Digital Age" in **Vienna** organized by the International Peace Institute and spoke on the panel, Diplomacy in a Digital Age.

On **16 May** I participated in the conference "Journalists and Whistleblowers in an era of Mass State Surveillance" in **Budapest** organized by Central European University.

On **19 May** my Office participated in a round-table discussion on "The safety of journalists: from commitment to action" in **Strasbourg** organized by the Council of Europe.

On **20 May** I spoke at the meeting of the OSCE Human Dimension Committee in **Vienna** and presented the updated second edition of the OSCE Safety of Journalists Guidebook. The electronic version of the book is available in English and Russian at <http://www.osce.org/fom/118052>.

On **21 May** my Office participated in consultation meetings for the 2014 country progress reports upon invitation of the European Commission DG Enlargement in **Brussels**.

On **27-28 May** I attended the **Stockholm** Internet Forum centered on the topic "Internet – privacy, transparency, surveillance and control" organized by SIDA and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and participated in a panel discussion on privacy, transparency and control issues related to the Internet.

On **30-31 May** the Principal Adviser of participated in and gave a presentation at the event "Public policy and regulation of the press in Morocco" on the new press laws in Morocco, organized by the National Council of Human rights in **Casablanca**. The presentation focused on international standards of freedom of expression and freedom of the media.

On **5-6 June** I attended the EPRA Meeting as an observer organized by the Agency of Electronic Media of Montenegro in **Budva**.

On **10 June** my Office attended and spoke at the event “Panel Discussion BlogOpen-BlogClosed” in **Belgrade**.

On **11 June** I participated in the 26th Session of the UN Human Rights Council on the safety of journalists in **Geneva** hosted by the UN. I also participated in a side event on the release of a report on “Freedom of Opinion and Expression in Electoral Contexts” prepared by Frank LaRue, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

On the **11 June** my Office participated as an observer at the Transparency Summit in **Berlin** on transparency around government surveillance and access to user data organized by Google, Global Network Initiative and the Center for Democracy and Technology.

On **12-13 June** I participated in the conference in **Tirana** on “Media and journalism in South East Europe – Captured by particular interests or turning to serve the public?” organized by the South East Europe Media Observatory in **Tirana**.

On **12-14 June** the Director participated in and gave a keynote speech **on media freedom in Central and Eastern Europe** at a conference “Changing media and democracy: 25 years of media freedom and public sphere in Central and East Europe,” organized by the Polish Communication Association together with University of Wroclaw in **Wroclaw**.

On **13 June** I chaired the opening panel of the “Western Balkans Regional Conference on Hate Speech” on "Defining and identifying hate speech" organized by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo in **Pristina**.

Conferences

Open Journalism

The media landscape across the OSCE region is changing faster than ever before. While technological changes mean that journalism and media are irreversibly changing, our basic human rights remain the same.

My Office actively promotes issues related to freedom of the media and freedom of expression on the Internet, most recently through a high-level expert discussion at the ‘Internet 2013’ conference in Vienna, and research and publications such as the 2013 Social Media Guidebook’ and ‘Online Media Self-Regulation Guidebook,’ as well master classes on regulatory and legal issues related to online media.

Today there is a greater plurality of actors engaged in the media landscape. New platforms and tools equip practically everyone to create and share sound, text and images. The audience is now participating in the news-making and distribution and a growing number of alternatives to traditional media actors are all contributing to the public debate. They have the reach, impact and perform the role of a public watchdog, a role that is progressively been recognized by Council of Europe and other international organizations and institutions, including the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

In order to assist the OSCE participating States to take advantage of, and to tackle the challenges posed by these changes, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media is launching a series of Expert Meetings on Open Journalism.

On **5 May** my Office organized and hosted the first event in a series of meetings of experts, policymakers and regulators touching on the practice and terminology of Open Journalism, legal issues, accountability and regulatory challenges. Information about the project is available at <http://www.osce.org/event/open-journalism>

The meetings will facilitate our understanding of the issues involved and best practices in the field. From that, a series of master classes will be held in the regions to develop the skills of those involved in process, from representatives of media organizations, the online community, relevant government ministries, Internet intermediaries, legislators, lawyers and others.

The first meeting, which took place in **Vienna**, was attended by experts from throughout the OSCE region as well as representatives from participating States.

The next expert meeting will focus on legislative and regulatory aspects of the issue and is tentatively scheduled for the end of September.

The recommendations of the Office on Open Media are available at <http://www.osce.org/fom/118873>

Central Asia Media Conference on Public Service Broadcasting Models

On **22-23 May** my Office organized the Central Asia Media Conference devoted to best practice sharing on public service broadcasting models in the region in **Bishkek** in which more than 70 experts from Estonia, Germany, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Mongolia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan participated. The conference focused on various models of funding, management and ways to guarantee that programming fosters social cohesion and national identity. The conference showcased the Public Broadcasting Corporation of Kyrgyzstan (OTRK) established in 2010, as the first public service broadcaster in Central Asia. The conference was organized in cooperation with the OSCE Centre in Bishkek, the nongovernmental media network Internews and OTRK.

Publications

During the current reporting period the Office produced the 15th edition of the Yearbook of the Representative on Freedom of the Media covering the year 2013.

It also commissioned and printed the Second Edition of the Safety of Journalists Guidebook and reprinted the Online Media Self-Regulation Guidebook and the 2013 Social Media Guidelines publications.

My Office supported research on access to information conducted by Almaty-based nongovernmental organization MediaNet. The resulting document reviews legislation

governing access to information in Kazakhstan, stresses international principles on access to information and outlines recommendations for the media community. It is available at <http://medianet.kz/283>

My Office contributed support for and I authored the Foreword to the Safety of Journalists in Central Asia Guidebook published by the Russian Union of Journalists.

Planned activities for the next reporting period

Conferences

The next meeting of the journalists' associations from Ukraine and the Russian Federation is planned for **27 June** in **Vienna**.

My Office plans to organize a one-day event in **Vienna** in **September**, focusing on tolerance, non-discrimination and freedom of expression. In the coming weeks my Office will prepare the proposal for the project, to be funded from extra-budgetary contributions by participating States.

Training

In the beginning of July I plan to visit Belarus to meet with authorities and journalists. Within the framework of the visit, my Office, in co-operation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will hold a training course in Minsk on the interaction between the law enforcement agencies and members of the media.

Extra-budgetary donors

I would like to thank the governments of Sweden, the Czech Republic and Serbia for funding the Open Journalism project and Germany for funding The Safety of Journalists and Reporting During Crisis Ukraine projects.

I would also like to thank Finland and the Netherlands for funding the Central Asia Media Conference on Public Service Broadcasting Models in Bishkek.

I encourage all participating States to consider supporting my Office's efforts to improve the media landscape throughout the OSCE region.