



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Presence in Albania**

**HEAD OF PRESENCE REMARKS ON THE OCCASION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF MEDIA ETHICS, 23 SEPTEMBER 2011**

Ladies and gentlemen good morning.

For the OSCE Presence in Albania, I am pleased to be part of this forum today to remember once again the importance of the concept of media ethics.

It is for good reasons that the media is often referred to as the 'fourth power' in modern democracies, where they function as watchdogs for public good over the legislative, the executive and the judiciary.

In that role, press and electronic media and in the age of cyberspace, the internet, are all looked upon as possible sources of hopefully truthful, factual, accurate and impartial information.

In constitutional democracies who are still in the stage of transition the role of the media assumes even greater importance as newspapers, radio and TV stations also need to act as what can be called public educators.

Through the mass media, citizens learn not only how the mechanisms of government work but also what powers they have as voters and as tax payers to influence the way they are governed.

However, in many instances, what the mass media do in terms of reporting may at times be of secondary importance to the way in which they do it.

Certainly the media should be free of any political and economic interference in performing their public duty to inform the people.

Yet, journalists and editors also have a duty to nurture a strong loyalty to their professional responsibilities by their strict adherence to the principles of accuracy, objectivity and timeliness.

One would be justified in thinking that the fast developing information and communication technology would help the dissemination of information to a broader audience.

Yet we now stand at a junction whereby the technological advances are being used to violate the basic principles of media ethics, including the principle of the sanctity of private life.

A case in point is the ongoing investigation in the United Kingdom of the now defunct *News of the World* newspaper for allowing and encouraging their journalists to hack into the private cell phone conversations of people.

Regardless of the outcome of this investigation, the image of the profession of journalism has already suffered considerably as a result of the practice of what is commonly referred to as phone hacking.

Modern day advances in information and communication technology also pose a major threat to the right of the individual to be informed using the means of mass media. Spam, or unwanted e-mails are another unhelpful form of threat.

The ease and low cost of using the worldwide web as an information platform has allowed the dissemination of all kinds of information on the Internet.

While much of the information available helps people to expand their horizons of knowledge, there are also cases whereby the information is less than scientific or accurate.

This is just another reason why as news consumers we need a free, independent and also responsible media more than ever, not just to inform us, but also to help us to tell right from wrong.

However, for journalists to be able to fulfil their responsibilities towards the public, they should be free from fear and free from greed.

One can only sympathize with the reticence of a journalist in investigating corruption if that journalist comes under pressure or threats either from their employers or from holders of influential business or political positions.

At this point, it needs to be underlined that it is the duty of the state to prepare and maintain the conditions for the media to report freely, including by securing adherence to proper employment contracts by media owners.

The state should not attempt to regulate editorial content under the guise of regulating the business as the problems that stem from the freedom of media can only be solved by more freedom of media.

It is with this understanding that the OSCE Presence in Albania has been supporting Albanian media through institutional and practical assistance at various levels, like joining the drafting of the media ethic code back in 2006.

The recent review of the Government's digitalization strategy, support for the creation of the self regulatory body "Albanian Media Club", and the contribution to the discussions on the draft law on broadcast media are just a few of the examples of the initiatives that the Presence has been undertaking in recent months.

The OSCE Presence will continue to contribute to the development of a free, independent and responsible media in Albania as long as necessary.

Thank you very much.

E.o.T.

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