



Statement by Ambassador Kristín A. Árnadóttir, Permanent Representative of Iceland, at the 1374th Permanent Council Meeting, Vienna, 19 May 2022

Iceland aligns itself with the EU statement but please allow me to make few additional remarks in our national capacity.

Mr. Chair,
Colleagues,
Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Teresa Ribeiro.

At the outset, let me reiterate Iceland's full support to your work, Ms. Ribeiro, and extend our appreciation for your report.

Iceland shares the Representative's concerns over the deteriorating situation of media freedom in the OSCE region.

Your report shows that the importance of standing together in defense of this fundamental pillar of democracy cannot be overstated.

In particular, we are worried about how media workers are facing brutal threats, imprisonment, legal harassment and even threats to their own lives, where women journalists are often disproportionately targeted.

In that regard, let me express our appreciation for the brave work of those documenting, investigating, and reporting on Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine, including on war crimes and human rights violations.

Media freedom and the right of freedom of opinion and expression is at the heart of democratic societies - freedoms enshrined in international human rights instruments and expressed in OSCE commitments.

Free and independent media serves as a watchdog for the public interest; ensures informed public debate, facilitates dialogue, and holds governments accountable.

Representative,

Iceland appreciates the work of your mandate in holding Government's accountable and in monitoring the implementation of our commitments. Our duty is to protect and continue to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, to stay alert and take actions to counteract the progressive decline in media freedom. In that regard, your mandate and office play a critical role.

Iceland takes note of the mentioning of Iceland in your bi-annual report. We take our commitments seriously and highly appreciate your careful monitoring of media freedom within OSCE participating States.

The promotion and protection of human rights, democratic values and freedoms, and the safeguarding of the rule of law, are core priorities for the Government of Iceland, in both domestic and foreign policies. This includes the freedom of the media and freedom of opinion and expression, as well as the right to fair trial before an independent judiciary and a well-functioning and trustworthy justice system.

I thank you Mr. Chair