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Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the OSCE

**STATEMENT BY MR. BORIS TIMOKHOV,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

11 March 2004

Mr. Chairman,

We are pleased to welcome the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr. Miklos Haraszti, to today's meeting of the Permanent Council, his first as Head of one of the main institutions of the OSCE. We sincerely congratulate Mr. Haraszti on his appointment.

Our colleagues are aware of the enormity of the tasks facing the office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. In actual fact, throughout the OSCE area there is not a single country where to one degree or another there has not been a violation of freedom of the media or freedom of expression. This applies both to States which embarked on the path of democracy in the 1990s as well as those having traditional democratic foundations. Democratic principles are more and more frequently unable to withstand the new risks and contemporary challenges to which they are exposed; they are being eroded and subjected to unjustified restrictions. The media's structural problems, in particular those associated with monopolistic trends, are making it increasingly difficult for journalists and consumers to exercise their rights to creative freedom and unrestricted access to information respectively. Violations at both these levels require our special attention. What is more, in the age of globalization, many processes which accompany the development of the media in different countries or groups of countries are interdependent and require comprehensive examination.

We trust that the work of the office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media under the management of Mr. Haraszti will take a balanced and impartial approach; interaction and co-operation with participating States, not constant criticism in the Permanent Council of one or another State, should characterize the office's working methods if OSCE participating States are to be given real help in meeting their obligations. We are aware that the possibilities of the office are not endless and, for this reason, we are prepared on our part to do everything we can to help the office develop constructive dialogue and co-operation.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, allow me to say the following. Among the areas of priority importance in the work of the office, such as promoting new technologies, improving legislation, drawing up ethical codes for journalists or ensuring respect for freedom of the media in the context of the war on terrorism, there is one subject discussion of which is, in our view, long overdue — namely the responsibility of journalists to their readers and to

society, a responsibility that need place no restrictions whatsoever upon their freedom. One can think of many, indeed hundreds of situations when a lack of this kind of responsibility has led to tragic consequences, in inter-ethnic relations for example. We are by no means asking the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to advocate any kind of restrictions — this is actually impossible in a civilized society — but this dialectic problem really does exist, and unless the community of journalists find a solution to it themselves, countries pursuing the path of democracy will repeatedly encounter obstacles. We believe that, under the leadership of Mr. Haraszti, his office will see its work in the proper light and succeed in solving its complex conceptual tasks throughout the OSCE area. Permit me, Mr. Chairman, to wish Miklos Haraszti success in all of his work in this important post.