

Chairmanship: Sweden

1343rd PLENARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

1. Date: Thursday, 4 November 2021 (in the Neuer Saal and via video teleconference)

Opened: 10 a.m.
Suspended: 1.05 p.m.
Resumed: 3 p.m.
Closed: 6.30 p.m.

2. Chairperson: Ambassador U. Funered
Ambassador T. Lorentzson

3. Subjects discussed – Statements – Decisions/documents adopted:

Agenda item 1: REPORT BY THE HIGH COMMISSIONER ON NATIONAL MINORITIES

Chairperson, High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM.GAL/9/21/Corr.2), Slovenia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Andorra, Georgia, Moldova, Monaco, San Marino and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1752/21), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/1707/21), Belarus (PC.DEL/1738/21 OSCE+), Turkey (PC.DEL/1760/21 OSCE+), Azerbaijan (PC.DEL/1716/21 OSCE+), United Kingdom, Serbia (PC.DEL/1740/21 OSCE+), Hungary (PC.DEL/1712/21 OSCE+), United States of America (PC.DEL/1706/21), Georgia, Ukraine (PC.DEL/1741/21), Switzerland (PC.DEL/1737/21 OSCE+), Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia (PC.DEL/1731/21), Kazakhstan, Croatia, Norway (PC.DEL/1708/21), Lithuania (PC.DEL/1710/21/Corr.1 OSCE+), Tajikistan, Latvia (Annex 1), Uzbekistan, Moldova (PC.DEL/1713/21 OSCE+), Canada

Agenda item 2: REPORT BY THE CO-ORDINATOR OF OSCE ECONOMIC
AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES

Chairperson, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (SEC.GAL/151/21/Rev.1 OSCE+), Slovenia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Andorra, Georgia, Moldova, Monaco, San Marino and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1753/21), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/1721/21), Azerbaijan (PC.DEL/1755/21 OSCE+), Turkey (PC.DEL/1729/21 OSCE+), United Kingdom, United States of America (PC.DEL/1709/21), Georgia, Switzerland (PC.DEL/1715/21 OSCE+), Ukraine (PC.DEL/1742/21), Turkmenistan, Belarus (PC.DEL/1736/21 OSCE+), Canada, Armenia (PC.DEL/1732/21), Kazakhstan (PC.DEL/1718/21 OSCE+), Norway

Agenda item 3: DECISION ON THE TIMETABLE OF THE
TWENTY-EIGHTH MEETING OF THE OSCE
MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

Chairperson

Decision: The Permanent Council adopted Decision No. 1418 (PC.DEC/1418) on the timetable of the Twenty-Eighth Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, the text of which is appended to this journal.

Russian Federation (interpretative statement, see attachment 1 to the decision), Slovenia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro North Macedonia and Serbia; the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Georgia, in alignment) (interpretative statement, see attachment 2 to the decision)

Agenda item 4: REVIEW OF CURRENT ISSUES

Chairperson

- (a) *Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea:* Ukraine (PC.DEL/1744/21), Slovenia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1747/21), Canada, Turkey (PC.DEL/1757/21 OSCE+), Switzerland (PC.DEL/1719/21), United Kingdom, United States of America (PC.DEL/1717/21)

- (b) *Deteriorating situation in Ukraine and continued non-implementation by the Ukrainian authorities of the Minsk agreements*: Russian Federation (PC.DEL/1722/21), Ukraine
- (c) *First anniversary of the issuance of a report under the Moscow Mechanism in relation to serious human rights violations in Belarus, and invocation of the Vienna Mechanism*: United Kingdom (also on behalf of Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United States of America) (Annex 2), Slovenia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1746/21), United States of America (PC.DEL/1720/21) (PC.DEL/1723/21), Canada, Russian Federation (PC.DEL/1726/21), Belarus (PC.DEL/1733/21 OSCE+), United Kingdom, Germany
- (d) *Flagrant violations of freedom of the media in Latvia*: Russian Federation (PC.DEL/1724/21), Slovenia-European Union, Latvia (Annex 3)
- (e) *International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, observed on 2 November 2021*: Slovenia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Andorra, Georgia, San Marino and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1748/21), Ukraine (PC.DEL/1743/21), France (also on behalf of Austria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States of America) (Annex 4), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/1725/21)
- (f) *Resumption of executions in the US state of Oklahoma*: Slovenia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Andorra, Moldova, San Marino and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1751/21), United States of America (PC.DEL/1727/21)

Agenda item 5: REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
 CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE

- (a) *Briefing on the monthly topic of the Swedish OSCE Chairmanship for November 2021, which is gender equality*: Chairperson
- (b) *Deadline for nominations for the 2021 OSCE White Ribbon awards for the promotion of gender equality*: Chairperson

- (c) *Update on the COVID-19 situation and the conduct of OSCE meetings in Vienna: Chairperson*

Agenda item 6: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

- (a) *Visit by the Secretary General to Skopje, Tetovo, Belgrade and Pristina from 22 to 27 October 2021: Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (SEC.GAL/153/21 OSCE+)*
- (b) *Participation of the Secretary General in the Chambésy Roundtable on European Security, held in Switzerland on 28 and 29 October 2021: Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (SEC.GAL/153/21 OSCE+)*
- (c) *Address by the Secretary General to the tenth annual meeting of early-warning focal points in the OSCE executive structures, held in Vienna and via video teleconference on 2 November 2021: Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (SEC.GAL/153/21 OSCE+)*
- (d) *Participation of the Secretary General in a side event at the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP-26), entitled “Climate, Peace and Stability: Weathering Risk through COP and Beyond” and held in Glasgow and via video teleconference on 2 November 2021: Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (SEC.GAL/153/21 OSCE+)*
- (e) *Meeting of the Secretary General with the High Commissioner on National Minorities, held in Vienna on 3 November 2021: Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (SEC.GAL/153/21 OSCE+)*
- (f) *Extension of the deadline for applications for the post of Director of the OSCE Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe: Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (SEC.GAL/153/21 OSCE+)*
- (g) *Fifth OSCE-wide Seminar on Passenger Data Exchange, held in Vienna and via video teleconference on 28 and 29 October 2021: Armenia*

Agenda item 7: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Local elections in Georgia, held on 2 and 30 October 2021: Georgia, Slovenia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; as well as the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1750/21) United States of America (PC.DEL/1728/21), United Kingdom (PC.DEL/1735/21 OSCE+), Azerbaijan (PC.DEL/1754/21 OSCE+)

4. Next meeting:

Thursday, 11 November 2021, at 10 a.m., in the Neuer Saal and via video
teleconference



1343rd Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1343, Agenda item 1

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF LATVIA**

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

Latvia fully aligns itself with the statement by the European Union, but I should like to take this opportunity to add some remarks in my national capacity.

We join the other delegations in warmly welcoming the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov, to the Permanent Council and thank him for presenting what is now his second report since he assumed that post.

Latvia sets great store by its collaboration with the High Commissioner, and we wish him and his able team every success in their ongoing work and future efforts.

Madam Chairperson,

People from more than 150 ethnic groups reside in Latvia. Around 35 per cent of Latvia's population belong to ethnic minorities.

Latvia is committed to safeguarding the right of persons belonging to national minorities to preserve their language and culture, and to ensuring that everyone in the country has access to quality education, including education in their mother tongue. Latvia will continue to finance bilingual education programmes in seven minority languages for persons belonging to national minorities.

We agree with the High Commissioner that it is important to keep national minorities within the national information landscape and to prevent the emergence of parallel information spaces, the danger of which has been starkly demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic. We likewise strongly believe that it is of the utmost importance to protect the vast plurality of the media in Latvia and to ensure that opportunities for minority communities to access media in their mother tongue are maintained.

Latvia will also continue, as the High Commissioner has noted in this and the previous report, consultations with minority communities on policies affecting them.

As the High Commissioner urges in his report, Latvia is ready to engage in exchanges with other participating States with a view to sharing our best practices.

Madam Chairperson,

Before concluding, I must note with regret the misleading comments regarding Latvia made once again by the Russian delegation.

Citizenship status and a person's ethnicity, as is well known to everyone, are two different concepts. Any attempt to equate the two is intentionally deceptive.

As for the media, there are more television channels in Latvia broadcasting in the Russian language than in Latvian – much more. The ratio is approximately four to one: that is, out of almost 400 television channels, only 50 are in Latvian, while more than 200 are in Russian. Not to mention Internet sites, radio and printed media and the many other languages in which they are all available.

Latvia is determined to maintain this plurality of views and the plurality of languages in which the media can be accessed.

Latvia is a country in which human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, are respected. Latvia not only protects but also widely supports the languages, education and cultures of national minorities.

In closing, allow me once again to thank the High Commissioner on National Minorities for his work, in particular for his second report, and to wish him and his highly professional team every success in their future endeavours. I reaffirm Latvia's commitment to the continuation of our successful co-operation.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson. I kindly ask that my statement be attached to the journal of the day.



1343rd Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1343, Agenda item 4(c)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM
(ALSO ON BEHALF OF ALBANIA, AUSTRIA, BELGIUM, BULGARIA,
CANADA, CROATIA, CYPRUS, CZECH REPUBLIC, DENMARK,
ESTONIA, FINLAND, FRANCE, GERMANY, GREECE, HUNGARY,
ICELAND, IRELAND, ITALY, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, LUXEMBOURG,
MALTA, MONTENEGRO, THE NETHERLANDS, NORTH
MACEDONIA, NORWAY, PORTUGAL, ROMANIA, SLOVAKIA,
SLOVENIA, SPAIN, SWITZERLAND, UKRAINE AND
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)**

Mr. Chairperson,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the following thirty-five participating States: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Ukraine, and the United States of America.

During the Seventh OSCE Summit of Heads of State held in Astana in December 2010, all OSCE participating States emphasized that we are accountable to our citizens and each other for the full implementation of our OSCE commitments, and that we consider our commitments to be matters of immediate and legitimate concern amongst all participating States.

In that spirit, we stress that our countries continue to be deeply concerned about serious human rights violations and abuses taking place in Belarus. On 17 September 2020, 17 participating States invoked the OSCE's Moscow Mechanism to establish a mission of experts to look into and report on credible accounts of human rights violations and abuses occurring before, during and after the presidential election of 9 August 2020. Those concerns were identified as particularly serious threats to the fulfilment of the provision of the OSCE human dimension in Belarus. In addition to establishing the facts and reporting them, the mission was also encouraged to provide recommendations and advice.

The subsequent independent report, authored by the rapporteur, Mr. Wolfgang Benedek, was formally presented to the Permanent Council on 5 November 2020. The report's conclusions were clear. The 9 August 2020 presidential election results were neither free nor fair, and "massive and systematic" violations and abuses of human rights and fundamental freedoms had been committed by the security forces. In addition, the report also made a number of recommendations to the Belarusian authorities, to all participating States and to the wider international community.

Since the publication of the Moscow Mechanism report, almost a year ago, the situation in Belarus has deteriorated. Our delegations have repeatedly called on the Belarusian authorities to implement the report's recommendations. We have also called on the Belarusian authorities to take up the offers of the current Chairmanship, together with the previous and subsequent Chairmanships, to facilitate a true national dialogue between the Belarusian authorities and representatives of the opposition and civil society. Regrettably, the Belarusian authorities have not implemented the Moscow Mechanism report's recommendations, nor have they made use of the OSCE's institutions, bodies and mechanisms to help resolve the ongoing crisis.

Instead of seeing a move towards a resolution of the crisis in Belarus, the situation has worsened and the Belarusian authorities' response has continued to be inadequate.

Therefore, in response to the Belarusian authorities' failure to respond satisfactorily to the 5 November 2020 Moscow Mechanism report, and considering our additional concerns over ongoing developments in the last 12 months, our countries are today invoking the Vienna (Human Dimension) Mechanism and Belarus' commitments under that Mechanism.

Our concerns include, but are not limited, to the following:

- Freedom of peaceful assembly: the Belarusian authorities have unduly restricted the right to freedom of assembly, by prohibiting peaceful protests, and arresting and using excessive force against peaceful protestors. The recent amendments to the Law on Mass Events is only one example of actions that are of concern.
- Media freedom: before and after the 2020 presidential election, large numbers of independent media, journalists and media actors have been subject to repression, with the ordered closure of the Belarusian Association of Journalists only one example of independent voices being silenced by the authorities' actions.
- Continued arbitrary or unjust arrests or detention: credible reports allege there are currently over 800 political prisoners in Belarus. Many individuals have been detained for participating peacefully in the political opposition around last year's presidential elections and the subsequent peaceful demonstrations, and for reporting and documenting human rights violations and abuses by the Belarusian authorities. The forced diversion and landing of Ryanair flight FR4978 on 23 May 2021 for the apparent purpose of arresting journalist Roman Protasevich and his partner Sofia Sapega, is the highest profile example of politically motivated arrests over the last 12 months.

- Targeting of opposition figures: human rights groups report the targeting of opposition figures by the Belarusian authorities, as exemplified by the cases of Maria Kolesnikova and Maksim Znak who, following closed trials, were sentenced to 11 and 10 years imprisonment, respectively. In addition to the detention and imprisonment of opposition figures, there are growing credible allegations of State controlled media, and social media channels, being used to spread threats of violence against opposition figures, civil society and media actors.
- Torture: credible reports allege that more than 1,500 cases of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment have occurred since the presidential election. The International Accountability Platform for Belarus has so far documented more than 300 reported cases. The decision by the Investigative Committee of Belarus, announced on 26 August 2021, not to open criminal investigations into 680 complaints is indicative of a culture of impunity.
- Migration: the sharp increase in irregular migration across the Belarusian border, caused by the Belarusian authorities' political instrumentalization of migrants and refugees, puts vulnerable people at risk, adversely impacts their human rights, and has a destabilizing effect on regional security.

For these reasons, and in accordance with Belarus' OSCE commitments under the Vienna (Human Dimension) Mechanism, we request concrete and substantial responses to the following:

1. Have steps been taken by the Belarusian authorities to investigate allegations that the right to freedom of peaceful assembly is being unduly restricted, that individuals are being arbitrarily detained or arrested, and that numbers of political prisoners are increasing? Please detail the actions taken.
2. Have steps been taken to investigate all allegations of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment? Please detail the actions taken, including steps taken to ensure the independence and integrity of investigations.
3. Have steps been taken to investigate allegations of hate crimes, including the use of State controlled media or social media accounts to incite violence? Please detail the actions taken.
4. Have steps been taken to ensure the ability of civil society and media actors to freely document and report, without reprisal, on human rights concerns in Belarus? Please detail the actions taken.
5. What steps are being taken by the Belarusian authorities to ensure it is not facilitating irregular migration (to other OSCE participating States) which puts vulnerable people at risk, impacts on their human rights, and has a destabilizing effect on regional security?
6. What engagement has there been with the OSCE's institutions, including the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Representative on Freedom of the Media, to respond to concerns raised by those institutions, and to help realize full compliance with OSCE commitments?

7. Have meaningful steps been taken, including through the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, to engage with the opposition, independent civil society and human rights defenders? Please detail such steps.

8. Please respond in detail to the recommendations contained in the 5 November 2020 report under the Moscow Mechanism.

We expect to receive information in response to these serious concerns in writing within ten days, in accordance with the Vienna (Human Dimension) Mechanism.

We request that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

1343rd Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1343, Agenda item 4(d)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF LATVIA**

Thank you, Madam Chairperson, and good afternoon to everyone.

I thank the Russian delegation for bringing up this topic, since now I have the opportunity to inform you about yet another instance of non-compliance with Latvian national law and European legislation by a Russian media outlet. Is it a coincidence or are these incidents systematic breaches of the law? The laws are the same for everyone in Latvia and they also apply equally to all media and all journalists, however, this tendency of certain Russian media to constantly commit offences is alarming. I should immediately add that these incidents have involved only a few out of all the media available in the Russian language in Latvia – that is, out of around 200 television channels, 44 public and private radio programmes, all five major Internet media and several printed media – and that such isolated cases should, of course, not cast a shadow over all such media.

On 20 October 2021, the National Electronic Mass Media Council adopted a decision to revoke the broadcasting licence issued to the media outlet Pirmais Baltijas Kanāls (PBK) for the programme “Pirmais Baltijas Kanāls Latvija” (“PBK Latvija”). The representatives of PBK were present. The decision was taken on the basis of Section 21 of the Electronic Mass Media Act, which provides for the revocation of a broadcasting licence if the Council identifies three significant violations of the Act within a one-year period. This was exactly what happened in the case of the “PBK Latvija” programme.

The three violations established by the Council within a one-year period are described in the decision of 20 October 2021 as follows:

1. On 22 October 2020, the Council imposed a fine on PBK for a significant violation of the principal conditions of its broadcasting licence. Specifically, the programme “PBK Latvija” had broadcast programmes created by other electronic mass media outlets in breach of the broadcasting licence. (This decision was taken pursuant to Sections 24 and 79 of the Electronic Mass Media Act.)
2. On 22 October 2020, the Council imposed a fine on PBK for non-compliance with the obligation to ensure that European audiovisual works make up at least 51 per cent of the weekly airtime of the “PBK Latvija” programme. (This decision was taken pursuant to Sections 24, 32 and 79 of the Electronic Mass Media Act.)

3. On 25 February 2021, the Council imposed a fine on PBK because the “PBK Latvija” programme had disseminated information that endangered public health or might pose serious risks. Specifically, remarks were broadcast to the effect that COVID-19 was not a highly contagious disease and could be prevented by eating herring. (This decision was taken pursuant to Sections 26 and 80 of the Electronic Mass Media Act.)

Evaluating the three violations of regulatory enactments committed by PBK, the Council concluded that each one was substantial, since it had caused damage to the rights and interests of the State, and endangered public health and safety, which was all the more serious during an emergency situation. PBK appealed against all three aforementioned decisions, filing applications with the district court (for review of the rulings of first instance) and then with the regional court (second-level appeal). Both courts upheld the Council’s decisions entirely.

Additionally, the Council identified systematic violations by PBK of the general provisions for the production of electronic mass media programmes and of the principal conditions of the broadcasting licence issued to PBK for the programme “PBK Latvija”.

In the Council’s opinion, PBK’s regular violations of regulatory enactments, significant non-compliance with the principal operating conditions of its broadcasting licence, and its dissemination of information endangering the State and public health and safety are incompatible with the task of electronic mass media and the legal operation of such media.

In adopting its decision of 20 October 2021, the Council also assessed the infringements committed by PBK with a view to determining whether this media outlet should be allowed to continue to operate in Latvia. In the Council’s view, all electronic mass media must comply with the regulatory framework and act in the public interest. PBK has not acknowledged any of the infringements it has committed; it has appealed against all the aforementioned judicial decisions and failed to pay the fines in full. The Council also noted that PBK committed violations in 2018 and 2019, and that there were ongoing legal proceedings in connection with another identified infringement, which also involved public health risks.

The broadcasting licence for the programme “PBK Latvija” was revoked as from 26 October 2021. PBK has the right to lodge an appeal against the decision with the Administrative Court within one month of its entry into force.

The fact that the Russian Federation calls these violations “allegedly serious” reaffirms the Council’s conclusion that there is no awareness of their gravity or any sense of regret over having committed them.

I shall not comment on the Russian Federation’s choice of words in referring to the European Union sanctions as “illegitimate” and would remind you that we have already responded on the Sputnik case at previous meetings of the Permanent Council. Nevertheless, given that the EU sanctions referred to in that case were triggered by actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine, I must stress

that the only illegitimate thing here is the Russian occupation of Crimea and parts of eastern Ukraine.

I very much hope that the continuous attempts to portray EU sanctions and EU law as “illegitimate” do not reflect a striving on the part of the Russian Federation not to have the same laws for everyone and instead to enact, for example, a provision to the effect that “this crime is punishable, except if committed by a journalist” or to exempt the media in general from any laws and regulations, because that would no longer have anything to do with the rule of law.

Those are questions I must once again ask when commenting on the next case mentioned by the Russian Federation, namely, that of Yuri Alekseev, who has been convicted for incitement to hatred, the prohibited storage of ammunition for firearms and the circulation of child pornography. The sentence is two years of imprisonment and is subject to judicial review if the defendant decides to appeal.

I wish to thank the Russian Federation for reminding us of the Budapest Document from 1994 and the 2018 Milan Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/18 on the safety of journalists, in which the OSCE participating States expressed their commitment to “[b]ring their laws, policies and practices, pertaining to media freedom, fully in compliance with their international obligations and commitments and to review and, where necessary, repeal or amend them so that they do not limit the ability of journalists to perform their work independently and without undue interference”.

Latvia, unlike most OSCE participating States, in addition to its national laws and OSCE obligations, also has EU legislation as part of its international obligations. Similarly, it is subject to scrutiny by the relevant European institutions as well as by its national ones when it comes to ensuring freedom of speech, freedom of the media and the safety of journalists. I very much hope that the Russian Federation at least holds the principles enshrined in the Budapest Document and the Milan Ministerial Council decision as dearly as we do.

I hope that the Russian Federation will recall these principles when considering whether to add yet another media outlet or journalist to its list of “foreign agents”, as it did on 8 October, when it added nine more persons, including journalists who had investigated the poisoning of Alexei Navalny.

I hope that these principles still mean something to the Russian authorities when they consider whether to block further websites, as they did on 28 October with Proekt, an investigative news site.

I hope that the Russian authorities will heed these principles when they consider whether to impose fines on media outlets and journalists for not complying with Russian national law, as occurred on 19 October, when a court sentenced the radio station Ekho Moskvyy and its chief online editor to the payment of no fewer than 24 fines, to cite just one example.

And since we are talking about things that happened in October in the context of freedom of expression, it is worth noting that a draft law was recently submitted to the State

Duma which would provide for the imposition of a sentence of 15 days' imprisonment on anyone who publicly compares the atrocities of the USSR during the Second World War to those of Nazi Germany. Does that sound like freedom of expression and freedom of speech?

Moreover, since yesterday we observed the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, it is also worth noting that 7 October was the 15th anniversary of the assassination of the Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya. The murder commissioners have not been found.

In this regard, we should again recall how in Milan we all agreed "not [to] limit the ability of journalists to perform their work independently and without undue interference". Similarly, the 1991 Moscow Document on the Human Dimension stipulates that any restriction in this sphere should be "prescribed by law and in accordance with international standards".

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

I kindly ask you to attach this statement to the journal of the day.



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1343
4 November 2021
Annex 4

Original: ENGLISH

1343rd Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1343, Agenda item 4(e)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF FRANCE
(ALSO ON BEHALF OF AUSTRIA, CANADA, DENMARK,
ESTONIA, FINLAND, GERMANY, GREECE, LATVIA, LITHUANIA,
MONTENEGRO, THE NETHERLANDS, NORWAY, SWEDEN, THE
UNITED KINGDOM AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)**

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to make this statement on behalf of the informal OSCE Group of Friends on the Safety of Journalists, namely Austria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

On 2 November, the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, we commended the work of all journalists and other media actors, online as well as offline, who risk their lives and health in the service of the general public every day. They are essential in upholding a free, independent, plural, and diverse media, as well as the right to freedom of expression and opinion.

We regret that in the OSCE area, restrictions on the freedom of the media have become more pervasive and threats to the safety of journalists more prevalent during the past years. Violence and the threat of violence against journalists and other media actors are on the rise. These unacceptable and alarming actions have included killings, torture, enforced disappearances, kidnapping, arbitrary arrest and arbitrary detention, expulsion, intimidation, threats, and harassment, both in online and offline environments. We unequivocally condemn all attacks, reprisals and violence against all journalists and other media actors and pay tribute to all those who suffered attacks in the exercise of their duties.

We are deeply saddened that during the past year, we have again witnessed several murders of journalists in OSCE participating States. Reaffirming what the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Teresa Ribeiro, stated in May of this year: “these murders are a terrible blow to all media, to society, and all of us, as they show that we still live in a region where journalists literally risk their lives when doing their work”.

The vast majority of crimes against journalists in the world continue to go unpunished: according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, this figure is nearly 90 per cent. Ensuring accountability by strengthening the response by law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice systems is crucial, including through access to effective remedies for victims and their families. It is of particular importance to strengthen legal frameworks and to create a safe working environment for those exposing corruption, organized crime, or abuses and violations of human rights.

We are deeply alarmed by the significant surge in attacks and repressions against journalists and other media actors covering protests. While the situation is worrying in many participating States, it is particularly serious in Belarus, where the crackdown against independent media has been systematic and far-reaching. One of the most high profile actions was the Belarusian authorities' 23 May forced diversion of a Ryanair flight with the apparent purpose of arresting an independent journalist who was critical of the regime. Journalists behind bars have endured beatings and reported torture, denial of timely legal or consular aid, forced testimonials of guilt, and other forms of intimidation and harassment. All recent cases of violence by law enforcement against independent media actors in the country have to be fully investigated. We therefore join the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Teresa Ribeiro, in stating that "it is urgently needed that the Belarusian authorities put an end to the current climate of impunity regarding violence against journalists."

It is very concerning that women journalists and media actors are disproportionately targeted for violence and threats globally. In the online space, women journalists and media actors are far more exposed to attacks than their male counterparts. Many female journalists face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and gender-based violence, including due to race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Sexual and gender-based violence and abuse, online and offline, can result in deepening existing gender-related inequalities. This risks affecting women's willingness to use their voices in the public space, thereby having a direct negative impact on democracy.

Now more than ever, we need to work decisively to end impunity for crimes against journalists. We would like to highlight the specific role and responsibility of the OSCE in this regard. The Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media has a strong mandate to report whenever the safety of journalists or media freedom are threatened in any participating State; a mandate we highly value and fully support.

However, it is our responsibility, as participating States, to act firmly when these cases occur, as highlighted in the Ministerial Council decision adopted in Milan in 2018 on the safety of journalists. As our ministers agreed in Moscow 1991, and our Heads of State later confirmed in Astana 2010, all OSCE participating States are accountable to our citizens and each other for the full implementation of our OSCE commitments. Our Heads of State confirmed that commitments in the field of human rights are matters of immediate and legitimate concern to all participating States.

We will not turn a blind eye to violence, reprisals and threats against journalists and media actors anywhere in the OSCE area. We hope all participating States will echo our demand to end impunity and act decisively to bring the perpetrators of crimes against journalists to justice.



1343rd Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1343, Agenda item 3

**DECISION No. 1418
TIMETABLE OF THE TWENTY-EIGHTH MEETING OF THE
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

(Stockholm, 2 and 3 December 2021)

The Permanent Council,

Recognizing that the Twenty-Eighth Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council will be conducted in accordance with the OSCE Rules of Procedure,

Decides:

To adopt the timetable of the Twenty-Eighth Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council as set out below.

Timetable

Thursday, 2 December 2021

- 10 a.m. **Opening session (open)**
- Formal opening and adoption of the agenda
 - Address by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office
 - Address by the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
 - Report by the OSCE Secretary General
- First plenary session (closed)**
- Statements by heads of delegations
- 1.15 p.m. Family photo

- 1.30 p.m. Lunch for Ministers for Foreign Affairs or heads of delegations
- 3–6 p.m. **Second plenary session (closed)**
- Statements by heads of delegations

Friday, 3 December 2021

- 10 a.m. **Third plenary session (closed)**
- Statements by heads of delegations
 - Adoption of Ministerial Council documents and decisions
 - Closing statements by delegations
 - Any other business
- Closing session (open)**
- Formal closure (statements by the current and incoming Chairpersons-in-Office)
- 1.30 p.m. Press conference

PC.DEC/1418
4 November 2021
Attachment 1

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

By the delegation of the Russian Federation:

“In joining the consensus regarding the Permanent Council decision on the adoption of the timetable of the Twenty-Eighth Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, the Russian Federation expresses its deep disappointment at the fact that once again it proved impossible to reach agreement on a list of international organizations, institutions and initiatives whose representatives will be invited to the Ministerial Council meeting and will have the right to address the meeting and/or distribute written statements, as provided for in the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE. The unacceptability of any hierarchy of international, regional and subregional organizations and associations is also made clear in the Platform for Co-operative Security, which is attached to the 1999 Charter for European Security.

The Russian Federation hopes that in future the OSCE participating States will manage to overcome their differences on this fundamental issue.

We take the position that, in the absence of a Permanent Council decision on the organizational modalities for holding the Twenty-Eighth Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, statements by representatives of international organizations during the Ministerial Council meeting should be possible solely in accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE – only on the basis of an oral consensus decision by all OSCE participating States.

I request that this statement be attached to the adopted decision and included in the journal of today’s meeting of the Permanent Council.”

**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

The delegation of Slovenia, in its capacity as EU Presidency, passed the floor to the representative of the European Union, who delivered the following statement:

“In connection with the Permanent Council decision just adopted on the timetable for the Twenty-Eighth Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council and in accordance with paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the OSCE Rules of Procedure, the European Union would like to make the following interpretative statement:

Paragraph IV.2(B)2 of the OSCE Rules of Procedure states that ‘the decision on the timetable and organizational modalities for each Ministerial Council meeting shall be adopted by the Permanent Council not later than one month before the meeting.’

While the European Union welcomes the decision adopting the timetable for the Twenty-Eighth Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, we regret that consensus could not be reached on the modalities for the meeting, and in particular on which organizations to invite and the modalities of their participation.

Under the OSCE Rules of Procedure for meetings of the Ministerial Council, Paragraph IV.2(B)5 states that, ‘For each meeting, the Permanent Council shall specify the list of international organizations, institutions, and initiatives to be invited to attend and to make oral and/or written contributions.’ In the absence of consensus on this issue, the Chairmanship should fall back on past agreed modalities.

The decision on the timetable of the Twenty-Eighth Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council does not represent a precedent for the organization of future Ministerial Council meetings.

We request that this statement be attached to the relevant decision.”

The candidate countries Republic of North Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, and Albania¹, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Georgia align themselves with this statement.

1 The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.