



PERMANENT MISSION OF ROMANIA
to the International Organizations in Vienna

Statement in response to the report of the Representative on Freedom of the Media, delivered by the Permanent Representative of Romania, Ambassador Stelian Stoian at the 1374th Meeting of the Permanent Council, 19 May 2022

Mr. Chairperson,

Let me join previous speakers in welcoming the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms Teresa Ribeiro, to the Permanent Council and thank her for her comprehensive report.

Mr. Chairperson,

Romania fully subscribes to the statement by the European Union. In addition, I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

This year we mark the 25th anniversary of the mandate of the Representative on Freedom of the Media. The chosen slogan for this year - *There is no security without media freedom*, could not be more true than today, in the light of the premeditated, unprovoked and unjustified Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, which we condemn in the strongest possible terms.

We thank the Representative for closely monitoring the media freedom situation and journalists' safety, as a result of the Russia's attack against Ukraine. As you stated, Ms Ribeiro, we haven't witnessed in past 25 years this scale of violations of our common principles and commitments regarding media freedom. We deplore that many journalists and media actors, from national and international media, were killed or injured, while reporting on the developments on the ground, including on the violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Many more were attacked, intimidated and abducted. Journalists are civilians, who perform a critical role in providing information during a conflict, and are not to be targeted. Their safety must be ensured.

We also condemn the widespread use of misinformation and disinformation by the Russian authorities and their affiliated media and proxies to justify the military aggression and spread false and harmful narrative, as well as the media censorship imposed by the Russian authorities that forced many independent foreign and local media to suspend their activities. Reliable information has never been as important as today and we commend the work of all journalists and media actors working every day to push back against lies and manipulations.

In this context, let me stress, as underlined also in the EU statement, that media should not be just an extension of official authorities and the content they promote should not be deployed by the State to promote war and hatred. *Sputnik* and *Russia Today* are under the permanent, direct or indirect, control of the authorities of the Russian Federation and are

instrumental in bringing forward and supporting the military aggression against Ukraine. In view of this, it was necessary and consistent with fundamental rights and freedoms to suspend these outlets' activities in the European Union.

Mr. Chairperson,

As pointed out by the Representative on Freedom of the Media, no country is immune to shortcomings. As a long-standing OSCE participating State, Romania is fully committed to implementing all commitments regarding media freedom and guaranteeing the independence, safety and protection of journalists.

As part of this commitment, the Romanian authorities show zero tolerance to harassment, violence and other hostile acts, perpetrated against media actors. At the same time, the Romania Government takes a strategic approach to prevent such acts. In this regard, developing media literacy programmes for the young generation is essential. A nation-wide media education and literacy programme for high-school teachers and students is being developed now in Romania, with the aim of reaching to nearly 50,000 beneficiaries, over the next two years. We are very confident in this pilot initiative and hope to multiply its results.

Mr. Chairperson,

I take this opportunity to inform that Romania has put forward its application for a seat in the United Nations Human Rights Council for 2023-2025. Romania served twice in the Council in the past (2011-2014 and 2006-2008) and we strongly believe that as a member of the Human Rights Council, Romania will contribute to advancing human rights and fundamental freedoms. Promoting media freedom and pluralism is a priority topic that Romania will focus on, if elected, as we believe our experience and proven commitment may generate positive transformations and meaningful impact in the work of the Human Rights Council.

Let me conclude by reiterating Romania's support to the mandate and independence of the RFoM and assure you, Ms. Ribeiro and your team, of our continuous support in these challenging times.

We look forward to welcoming you in Romania this year.

Thank you.