

Statement of Permanent Representative of Lithuania Ambassador Renatas Norkus

Forward Looking session on Media Freedom, Review Conference, Astana, 2010 11 26

Madam Chairperson,

While I fully subscribe to the EU statement just made by Germany, I would like to make a couple of comments in my national capacity and also in the capacity of the incoming Lithuanian Chairmanship-in-office.

First of all let me thank Ms. Dunja Mijatovič for her energy and determination performing the function of the Representative of the Freedom of the Media of the OSCE. Her constructive dialogue with, and assistance to participating States on media freedom commitments we collectively subscribed to, is of the utmost importance.

Another reason I am taking the floor, is to signal that in the area of freedom of expression and freedom of media not only a continued focus is needed on the implementation of existing OSCE commitments, but also there is an increasing need to check them against the dramatic changes, that the media environment has undergone since 1975 vis-a-vis the Digital Age technologies.

Freedom of expression and freedom of media represent the cornerstones of functioning democracies, free media plays a unique role in informing the public, especially in times of elections. Pluralistic media is a prerequisite to a free and open society. Therefore we deem it absolutely crucial that the theme of further promotion of pluralism in New media, including the Internet is clearly reflected in the Astana Summit decision.

My third point is that freedom of the media encompasses and requires that journalists and media workers enjoy safe working conditions, the ones that are free of violence and intimidation. We, the participating States of the OSCE

should undertake effective measures to promote safety of journalists, and to devise transparent public policies aimed at eradicating violence against them. The aim of the incoming Lithuanian chairmanship is to encourage an open, constructive, non-politicized and inclusive debate of politicians, law enforcement, media and civil society on necessary steps to improve the security of media workers in the OSCE area. If this debate shows, that we need to refresh or update our commitments in this area, let us do that. Let's contribute to greater media freedom. The role of the civil society in advocating media freedom is extremely important in this respect and can be further increased.

Ladies and gentlemen,

To conclude : Lithuania will be eager to engage with all participating States in an open dialogue on how to better implement existing OSCE commitments on media freedom and freedom of expression and to review how to strengthen the political commitment to reflect current developments in the media landscape.

Incoming Lithuanian Chairmanship looks forward to working with the RFoM to advance media freedom within the OSCE and we feel encouraged that Ireland has the intention to continue the work in this area beyond 2011.