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**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF SWITZERLAND AT THE
907th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

29 March 2012

**In response to the report by Ms. Dunja Mijatović,
OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media**

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatović, to the Permanent Council and thank her for the report on her work and, above all, for her inspiring oral presentation.

Switzerland welcomes the emphasis placed on the area of new media. The study by the Representative's Office of the situation with respect to freedom of expression in the context of Internet regulation in the OSCE area is an important milestone by which further work to promote freedom of expression in the World Wide Web can be guided. There is broad consensus to the effect that freedom of expression and the associated concept of media diversity both with respect to the traditional as well as the new media should be promoted on a priority basis. In this way, democratic structures in the OSCE area continue to be expanded and strengthened. There is no change in the basic right to freedom of expression because of technological developments. It is far more a question of guaranteeing the free flow of information using new platforms as well, i.e., to critically examine the situation as it actually exists in individual States, to identify improper restrictions and to introduce adaptations.

On the basis of her unique mandate, the Representative on Freedom of the Media has addressed disturbing trends and through her advice is assisting the participating States as they seek to deal with the shortcomings confronting them. We intend to continue to support this work in the future as well and are looking forward to the event to be organized by the Irish Chairmanship on 18 and 19 June in Dublin on the subject of Internet freedom.

Mr. Chairperson,

Switzerland is deeply concerned at the continuing repressive measures being taken against journalists, bloggers and Internet activists. These people are particularly vulnerable and in danger when they report about protests and protest movements. All countries have a responsibility to create a safe environment in which plurality of opinions, critical discourse and peaceful protest can take place. In this context, the safety of reporters must always be ensured.

Last week, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a resolution by consensus on the protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests. Switzerland initiated that resolution. We should therefore like to recall once more how important freedom of expression, including through peaceful protest, is for democratic societies. Everyone should be able to draw attention to unsatisfactory situations and to express peacefully their hopes and the demands that accompany them. In so doing, they should not have to fear the prospect of being beaten, arbitrarily arrested, imprisoned, tortured or killed. The good practices set out in the OSCE Safety of Journalists Guidebook and the Vilnius Recommendations serve as guidelines and show States and, in particular, their legislative bodies how they can better live up to their responsibilities and commitments in this area.

Mr. Chairperson,

Ms. Mijatović's report shows how essential it is that freedom of expression in general and in the new media in particular remain high on our agenda. Switzerland thanks the Representative on Freedom of the Media for her commitment and wishes to express its gratitude to the Lithuanian Chairmanship of 2011 and the Irish Chairmanship of 2012 for their efforts in this regard and assures them of its continued support.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.