



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
The Representative on Freedom of the Media
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Regular Report to the Permanent Council **for the period from 19 June 2015 through 26 November 2015**

Introduction

While we still have over a month left and the Ministerial Council has yet to take place, I would like to begin my remarks today by thanking the Chairmanship, in particular Chairperson-in-Office Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić and Chairperson of the Permanent Council Ambassador Vuk Žugić, and his wonderful staff for their support of our Office's work throughout the year. I look forward to working with the 2016 German Chairmanship.

I also would like to express my sincere appreciation to those participating States that have contributed extra-budgetary funds this year to support the work of our Office. I certainly hope we will be able to call on your generosity next year.

Finally, I would also like to thank Tajikistan and Ambassador Ismatullo Nasredinov for hosting the 17th Central Asia Media Conference in which 70 participants focused on how to improve pluralism and media freedom in the context of the digital switchover that took place in Dushanbe last week.

I am happy to announce that this reporting period has been busy and productive. My Office has organized three conferences, including one on abuse of female journalists online – a topic that mainstream media is beginning to focus on. We are out ahead of the field on this issue.

Our annual media conferences in Central Asia and the South Caucasus were, as always, very fruitful : The core goal of these meetings is to pull together the regional leaders, meaning journalists and government authorities, to review big-picture issues like the digital switchover and the daily issues that consume our days.

My staff has been busy traveling throughout the region to provide expert advice for many participating States. And I have been speaking at a plethora of venues on the top topics in media freedom.

But today I want to focus on one issue that has dominated the discussion in media freedom for the last 12 months and that is propaganda for war.

A year ago at this very forum I first raised the issue of propaganda emanating from the conflict in and around Ukraine. I called propaganda an ugly scar on the face of modern journalism and I called on governments to get out of the news business.

That is because when critical journalism suffers, society suffers. This is not a new concept to the participating States of the OSCE. It goes back to the beginning of this organization.

At the time of the Helsinki Final Act, the participating States committed themselves to promote “a climate of confidence and respect among peoples consonant with their duty to refrain from propaganda for wars of aggression” against other participating States.

Those promises were broken for the first time before and during in the war in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Dangerous stereotypes that dominated state media since the beginning of the crisis significantly contributed to the development of an intolerant atmosphere and influenced people’s beliefs and increased feelings of national and religious differences.

Creating an atmosphere of fear and general anxiety, with constant labelling of enemies was now expanded to nationalities. Ethnic intolerance, built by cleverly devised propaganda in the media, resulted in general support for a brutal war. Many studies and much research about the role of media in the former-Yugoslav conflict indicated that media, while serving the regime, produced war and hatred.

In his book “Forging the War,” Mark Thompson wrote that “verbal violence produced physical violence” and that the war initially started in the media. Italian journalist Paolo Rumiz also wrote in his book “Masks for a Massacre” that “War was already present in 1988 in headlines and articles.”

At the time of war, many journalists’ articles were dominated by ideological consciousness and based on execution of political plans, rather than professionalism and objectivity. Facts in these articles were interpreted very imaginatively and they had the form of arbitrary constructions, designed to achieve political interests. There are many examples to point to how media was instrumental in inciting and injecting hatred among people, violence and, ultimately, ethnic cleansing.

I know this all too well because I saw first hand the destructive power of propaganda for war.

As a result, during the past 12 months my Office has engaged in a campaign on several fronts to attack the root causes of propaganda and its all-too-likely consequences; ignorance, hate and hostility. The Office has spent considerable time and resources working with Russian and Ukrainian journalists in confidence-building measures designed to bridge the gap between them. We have instituted training for young journalists from the two States on such topics as ethics in journalism, conflict reporting and propaganda.

In June, we organized a large-scale conference on “Journalists’ Safety, Media Freedom and Pluralism in Times of Conflict” that addressed the issue in-depth with all stakeholders.

Today, I would like to offer another element that is part of our campaign – a non-paper on propaganda and freedom of the media. Developed by my Office, the treatise is an in-depth look at the legal and historical basis against propaganda. It is available here today and I want to make sure that you all receive it.

And within the context of this publication, I want to present the position of this Office on the issue.

This is what I believe.

1) Propaganda is especially dangerous when it dominates the public sphere and limits access to information, thereby preventing individuals from expressing and forming opinions and ideas, it is crucial to enforce media pluralism as an effective response that creates and strengthens a culture of peace, tolerance and mutual respect.

2) Governments and political leaders should refrain from funding and using propaganda, especially when propaganda may lead to intolerance, discriminatory stereotyping or may incite war, violence or hostility. This includes steps to abolish the media run by the government or its proxies, abstain from sponsoring online trolls or engage in other clandestine media operations.

3) Public service media with strong professional standards should be strongly supported in their independent, sustainable and accessible activity. An opposite line of action means corrupting the profession of journalism.

4) Propaganda should be generally uncovered and condemned by governments, civil society and international organizations as inappropriate speech in a democratic world and in the profession of journalism. Governments and political leaders have a crucial role to play in speaking out resolutely and promptly against instances of propaganda for war, of intolerant expression and instances of hate speech in the media.

5) The independence of the judiciary and media regulators should be guaranteed in law and in policy so that they do not serve political interests or be used to exploit restrictions on propaganda of hatred for curtailing dissenting voices and freedom of expression.

6) The root causes of propaganda for war and hatred should be dealt with a broad set of policy measures, for example, in the areas of international and intercultural dialogue, such as the dialogue among journalists and intellectuals, and promoting media education and democracy based on peace, freedom of expression, pluralism and diversity.

Citizens should be encouraged to express a range of views and information that embrace a healthy dialogue and debate. In addition, positive traditional values, compatible with internationally recognized human rights norms and standards, can also contribute to countering incitement to hatred and war.

7) National and international human rights and media freedom mechanisms, specialized self- and co-regulatory bodies, professional organizations and independent monitoring institutions should be enabled to foster social dialogue in a vibrant civil society and also address complaints about incidents of hateful propaganda. There is a need to boost the important work of regional human rights and media freedom watchdogs, such as the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, as they advise and support national policies in this regard. They should be enabled to facilitate dialogue to foster peace and intercultural understanding and learning.

8) Because only an informed, media-literate population can make rational and not emotional choices, strengthening educational programmes on media literacy and Internet literacy may dampen the flames that fire propagandists.

Governments should invest in such programmes, as well as facilitate media studies from the high school level.

9) Media self-regulation, where it is effective, remains the most appropriate way to address professional issues. Through self-regulation the media exercise their moral and social responsibility, including counter-action to propaganda of hatred and discrimination.

Ethical codes and self- and co-regulatory instruments should ensure that cases of propaganda are brought to the attention of the public. They must become a barrier to the negative stereotypes of individuals and groups being furthered by the media, raising awareness of the harm caused by discrimination. Journalist organizations, self-regulatory bodies and the owners and publishers of media outlets have the duty to take a serious look at the content they are producing.

Propaganda does a disservice to all credible, ethical journalists who have fought for, and, in some cases, given their lives to produce real, honest journalism.

Ladies and gentlemen, much of what I have just said today is self-evident.

In sum, propaganda for war and hatred is effective only in environments where governments control media and silently support hate speech. A resilient, free media system is an antidote to hatred.

It is as simple as that.

Identifying those situations where government controls media is the job of this Office – as is reporting it to this body.

The methods of ensuring free media – and letting this body know when there are dangers to free media – is also part of the role of this Office.

I trust that you will find this non-paper a handy resource and a benefit to your understanding of the legal and historical basis for the case against propaganda, as we join together in our fight to end its malicious effects on media and society in general. After all, that is the role of this Office, too.

And may I add a final point today.

The threats we face on our days are unprecedented. Security challenges are global and probably more catastrophic than ever. They are also less predictable. We must acknowledge that the level of security we are currently seeking is probably unattainable in its full. Therefore effective and proportionate anti-terrorist laws are needed in the OSCE countries. This is what we at the OSCE refer to as “comprehensive security.” It is one of the founding concepts of our organization; that both security and human rights are essential to ensure peace and stability. Simply, there can be no security without human rights and vice versa.

I do not like presenting this kind of debates as a dilemma between freedom and privacy versus security. There is no such a dilemma. Freedom should not be part of any transaction. Governments and societies should be aware of the fact that there is nothing which might

justify the erosion or direct violation of certain basic principles and rights which form the bedrock of modern democracies.

I do not in any way challenge the legitimate right of governments to fight terrorism and to protect our societies, but the laws should not be misapplied or abused so that they hinder the work of journalists and suppress free media and the right of free expression.

As part of my mandate I am closely following laws, policies and other forms of intervention by participating States which might interfere in the exercise of freedom of expression and freedom of the media. This includes of course media laws and regulations but unfortunately more and more it also refers to anti-terrorist legislation and policies. In recent times I had to raise my voice with regards to several initiatives undertaken by States in what we can call the post-Charlie Hebdo context. Allow me to give a short overview of the main issues which deserve a close attention and discussion.

Media have difficulties to report about surveillance and abuses on human rights due to expanding secrecy and national security laws. Transparency and accountability is being reduced in this specific field and journalists face serious difficulties in order to gather information, not to mention prosecution of whistle-blowers. New anti-terrorist laws are increasingly criminalizing almost any disclosure of classified information (including non-sensitive documents on issues of public interest) and make reporting on terrorism a very dangerous activity. This legislation will hinder the work of journalists and suppress free media and the right of free expression.

The right to not to disclose sources is, as we all know, a cornerstone in the protection of investigative journalism. In several countries of the OSCE area we have witnessed several and very negative changes in its regulation. More restrictions are being introduced in order to allow authorities to force journalists to reveal their sources of information. Such exceptions are quite often worded in very general and vague terms giving particular discretionary powers to authorities to interpret and apply them.

Governments are also increasingly applying criminal or national security measures to bypass traditional protections offered, by conducting searches of editorial offices and journalists' homes to seize unpublished material. These developments do not only have a fatal and chilling effect in investigative journalism but they cannot be justified on the grounds of the protection of national security.

Last, we have also seen serious cases of surveillance of journalists and their sources, despite the existence of very clear rulings in this area by the European Court of Human Rights and the very clear recommendations and concerns raised a few months ago by the UN Rapporteur of Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Opinion. Attacking the watchdog of democracy by tracking journalists activities, discovering their sources and trying to "know what they know" is a firm step toward totalitarianism and cannot be justified on any grounds.

Dear colleagues, the metaphor of the "war on terrorism" cannot justify a permanent state of emergency or the arbitrary and impunity of public authorities. Fight against terrorism will only be effective and victorious if we do not lose our most precious principles and values in the course of it. Otherwise, those who will win will be the enemies of our freedoms. And this is what we should fight against.

These are trying times. Recent events across our region are fraying our nerves and testing our resolve. It is exactly in times like these that we need to remember that the freedom of express ourselves is a plus and not a detriment to our societies. I say this because these are challenging times for free expression and its advocates. Let us not take this freedom for granted.

Let us continue to fight for the right to express ourselves and let us, as the OSCE, remember that the institutions you have created, including the Office of the Representative, play a critical role is defending this right.

Issues raised with participating States

Albania

On **19 June** I wrote to Foreign Minister Ditmir Bushati about new threats against Aurora Koromani, a journalist with the Gazeta Shqiptare newspaper. Earlier that month, Koromani received threats which I condemned in a public statement on 5 June (See Regular Report to the Permanent Council of 18 June 2015). I welcomed the launching of an investigation in to the incidents and the decision to provide protection for Koromani.

On **12 November** I issued a public statement expressing my concern about draft amendments to Albania's Criminal Code and called on members of the Parliament to reject the bill which introduces prison terms of up to three years for "libel against a high state official or elected person."

I welcome the fact that on 13 August the Albanian government pledged to abandon moves to restore prison sentences for defamation following much domestic and international criticism.

Armenia

On **23 June** I issued a public statement following incidents and actions by police involving journalists in Yerevan. Journalists from Radio Azatutyun (RFE/RL), Hetq.am, Gala TV, Haykakan Zhamanak, News.am, PanArmenian.net, Epress.am, 1in.am, and ArmTimes.com reportedly were physically attacked, mistreated, verbally assaulted and detained by police while covering a public demonstration. Some journalists also had their equipment damaged and seized. I called on the authorities to investigate these incidents and ensure restraint on the part of law enforcement representatives toward the media.

On **16 July** I wrote to Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian and issued a public statement expressing concern regarding reports that the Special Investigative Service started a criminal case against Kristine Khanumian, editor of the Ilur.am news portal, on the charge of deliberate failure to comply with a court order. The action follows a court decision of 26 June 2014 in which two media outlets, the Hraparak newspaper and Ilur.am news portal, were ordered to disclose their confidential sources (See Regular Report to the Permanent Council of 27 November 2014). I said that the media should not be liable for publishing information of public interest and expressed hope that the case would be dismissed.

On 24 July I received a response from the Prosecutor General indicating that the case had been dismissed. The prosecutor general invited me to attend a round-table discussion in

Yerevan regarding the protection of confidential sources and its implications for free media. A representative of my Office attended the event.

Azerbaijan

On **2 July** I wrote to Interior Minister Ramil Usubov expressing my concern regarding reports that on 30 June four journalists with the German-based independent online media platform Meydan TV were not allowed to leave Azerbaijan. According to reports, Ayten Farhadova, Şirin Trie Abbasov, Elnur Muxtarov and Natiq Cavadlı, who had been covering the European Games in Azerbaijan, were stopped by border officers while travelling to Georgia by train. No reason was provided. The journalists reportedly returned to Baku.

On 4 September I received a response from the authorities informing that the journalists are not subject to any travel limitations.

On **11 August** I wrote to President Ilham Aliyev and issued a public statement expressing my concern over the continuing deterioration of the media freedom situation and raising the issue of the deadly attack on journalist Rasim Aliyev. According to reports, Aliyev, a freelance reporter and chairman of the Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety in Azerbaijan, was beaten by a group of people in Baku on 8 August and died the next day. While I noted president's personal condemnation of the act, I reiterated my call to ensure the safety of journalists and to engage in a meaningful dialogue in order to address the issues of intimidation and imprisonment of the media. I again offered to assist Azerbaijan in much-needed improvements to media freedom.

On 18 August the Permanent Mission issued a press release regarding the attack on Rasim Aliyev saying that I had made inaccurate assessments of the media-freedom situation in the country.

On **27 August** I wrote to the authorities requesting to visit Baku to attend the trial of Radio Azadliq journalist Khadija Ismailova. I noted reports that members of the independent press and civil society had been denied access to the courtroom.

On **1 September** together with Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Nils Muiznieks, I issued a public statement condemning the sentencing of Ismayilova to 7.5 years in prison on charges of misappropriation and embezzlement, illegal business dealings, tax evasion and abuse of power. I said that the charges and the trial were unjust and they were another clear signal that the authorities are silencing critical voices in the country. I reiterated my call to stop targeting journalists.

On the same day the Permanent Mission issued a press release regarding my assessment of the case and the media freedom environment in the country. Specifically, the authorities criticized the views held by Commissioner Muiznieks and me regarding the conviction of Ismayilova.

I learned that on 25 November the Baku Court of Appeals turned down Ismailova's appeal of her conviction.

On **18 September** I wrote to Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov conveying my concern regarding the arrest of freelance journalist Shirin Abbasov, a contributor to the online media

platform Meydan TV. Reportedly, on 17 September Abbasov was placed under administrative arrest for 30 days, held incommunicado and without legal counsel with no reason being offered.

I said that Abbasov's arrest was particularly disturbing given the additional reports of intimidation of journalists who contribute to Meydan TV. On 16 September journalist Aytaj Ahmedova and an unnamed intern reportedly were detained by police, questioned for several hours and released. Again, no reason was provided.

In addition, according to media reports, in early September journalists Ayten Farhadova, Izolda Aghayeva, Natiq Javadli, Javid Abdullayev and Sevinc Vaqifqizi were summoned to the General Prosecutor's Office for questioning about the coverage of a public protest and the activities of Meydan TV.

Belarus

On **15 July** I wrote to Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei again to convey my concerns regarding the situation of freelance journalists in Belarus that continue to be prosecuted for working with foreign media without state-approved accreditation. I noted that at least 24 administrative fines had been imposed on journalists in 2015, more than double the number recorded last year. I reiterated that accreditation should not be regarded as a work permit and a lack thereof should not deprive journalists of their ability to work. I called on the authorities to engage in a meaningful dialogue with professional media organizations and civil society to reform accreditation requirements and to eliminate broad interpretations of the law which restrict media freedom. I also offered the assistance of my Office in coordinating joint efforts with media organizations and the government on this issue.

On **9 October** I issued a public statement congratulating Svetlana Alexievich, a Belarusian writer and journalist working primarily in the documentary prose genre, for winning the Nobel Prize in Literature. She is the first journalist to win the award. I said that Alexievich's tireless efforts serve as a remarkable example for independent and investigative journalists in Belarus and beyond.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

On **29 June-3 July** I made my first official visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina. I met with BiH Presidency Chairperson Mladen Ivanić and advisers to the other two members of the Presidency; Speaker of the BiH House of Representatives Šefik Džaferović and a group of parliamentarians; Chairperson of the Council of Ministers Denis Zvizdić; Foreign Minister Igor Crnadak; Minister for Human Rights and Refugees Semiha Borovac and Minister of Transport and Communications Slavko Matanović. I also met with Members of the Federation BiH Parliament, Deputy Prime Minister of Republika Srpska (RS) Anton Kasipović and Ministers of Interior Aljoša Čampara and Dragan Lukač, as well as RS Minister of Transport and Communications Neđo Trninić. I also met with the management and the board of the Communications Regulatory Agency, management of the three public service broadcasters, journalists and civil society representatives from across the country, as well as several ambassadors of OSCE participating States to BiH and the international community.

During my official visit I welcomed the decision of the BiH Council of Ministers to improve free expression legislation and increase efforts to fight impunity for assailants of journalists. I called for an immediate start of the digital switchover and welcomed the commitment by Minister of Transport and Communications Slavko Matanović to unblock the process. I repeated the need for a fully functioning, independent and sustainable public service broadcasting system and regulatory authority. I also expressed my concern for free expression on the Internet and the high number of civil defamation lawsuits, pursued mainly by politicians.

On **2 October** I publicly criticized the cyberattack on the news portal Nezavisne novine. I called on the authorities to conduct an investigation in order to prevent further violations of media freedom.

On **7 October** I publicly condemned the arson of the car of Emil Karamatic of BH Radio Mostar. I called on the authorities to condemn the attack on the highest level and to ensure prompt and transparent investigation to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Bulgaria

On 2 November I received an answer from the authorities to my letter of 6 May in which I expressed concern over an attempt to seize the equipment of television station TV7 to satisfy a debt to Corporate Commercial Bank. I said that excessive force shown during the event was intimidating and might endanger media freedom. The letter from the authorities contained an explanation about the procedures used, arguing that they had been in accordance with the law.

On **20 November** I called on the authorities in a public statement to fully investigate recent threats against journalists. On 20 October Dimitar Stoyanov, an investigative reporter with the news website Bivol, filed a police report after being followed by a number of unidentified people. On 21 October Stoyanov alerted the police that unknown perpetrators had broken into and searched his house. I said that there must be no impunity for threats and intimidation of journalists as it can lead to silencing of voices and endanger media freedom. I also recalled a number of previous threats and acts of intimidation against journalists in Bulgaria, including two arson attacks targeting television journalist Genka Shikerova in September 2013 and April 2014 and emphasized the need to thoroughly investigate all attacks against journalists.

Croatia

On **13 August** I wrote to Foreign Minister Vesna Pusić and issued a public statement the following day about recent attacks, intimidation and threats against journalists and urged the authorities to protect free expression and to ensure the safety of media representatives.

These include threats received by prominent theatre director and columnist Oliver Frlić; physical attacks on journalists Hrvoje Šimičević and Vladimir Kinderski; a break-in and raid on the weekly newspaper Hrvatski tjednik with a staffer, Antonio Mlikota, held at gunpoint; death threats against Katarina Marić Banje, a journalist at the daily newspaper Slobodna Dalmacija; threats against Drago Pilsel, a journalist at the daily Novi List; a physical attack on Nova TV journalist Domagoj Mikić; a hangman's noose and one page of a document stolen from his own home appearing in the mailbox of freelance journalist Domagoj

Margetić; as well as several recent verbal attacks and threats against the president of the Croatian Journalists' Association, Saša Leković, and the association itself.

I also welcomed progress in the investigation of the attempted murder of investigative journalist and blogger Željko Peratović and said that condemnation of the act by high-level officials would be a sign that violence against journalists would not be tolerated.

On 7 October I received a letter from Foreign Minister Pusić in response to my 13 August letter saying there were ongoing investigations in all cases of threats and attacks on journalists I listed in my letter. She said that the government strongly and publicly condemned these incidents and stressed that they give the utmost importance to free expression and the safety of journalists.

On **20 October** I issued a public statement calling on law enforcement officers to facilitate journalists reporting on the refugee crisis, following an incident on 19 October when border police interfered with journalists on the Serbian border. Al Jazeera, Reuters and Associated Press journalists had been obstructed in their work and Al Jazeera cameraman Boško Branković and AFP reporter Andrej Isaković had their equipment seized. I urged the authorities to comply with international standards when dealing with the media.

Denmark

On **11 September** I wrote to Minister of Justice Søren Pind about his announcement that the government intends to amend legislation on privacy and defamation to ensure “media responsibility.” I expressed concern that increasing penalties and damage awards for defamation and violation of privacy laws may affect the media’s right to critically report on matters of public interest and may have a chilling effect on media that possess fewer resources to satisfy financial judgments.

Estonia

On **18 September** I wrote to the authorities about Marina Perekrestova of Russia Today who was denied entry on 14 September at the Tallin airport when arriving from Moscow. On **21 October** I again wrote regarding Nikolay Vasilyev from All Russian Television and Radio Network who was briefly detained and had his visa annulled at the Koidula checkpoint of the Russian border on 15 October after a work assignment in Tallinn.

France

On **6 May** in a public statement I urged lawmakers to reconsider provisions of Draft law No. 2669 expanding surveillance, which was adopted by the National Assembly on 5 May and sent to the upper house Senate for debate.

On 11 May the French Delegation to the OSCE replied in a public statement that the draft law respects the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality. Under the law, collection of information activities would be submitted for prior authorization to an administrative authority comprised of judges, experts and parliamentarians.

The law was adopted by the Senate on 9 June and considered in conformity with the Constitution by the Constitutional Council on 23 July. The law went into effect on 24 July.

On **7 July** in a public statement I warned about the possible impact on freedom of information and free media on the Internet following a decision by the French data protection authority (CNIL) to order the search engine Google to apply delisting requests worldwide on all its domain names.

In a 7 September reply the authorities said that the obligation for search engines, based on individual claims, to delete links to websites which publish “inadequate, irrelevant or no longer relevant” data (commonly referred to as the “right to be forgotten”) is based on a ruling in 2014 by the European Union Court of Justice and also said that the original content is not deleted and remains accessible, and that the French data protection authority is always attentive to maintaining a balance between the public’s right to information and the fundamental rights of people making the request and, in particular, their right to privacy and data protection. In addition, they indicated that the principle of freedom of expression prevails and there are possibilities for the search engine Google to appeal the decision of the CNIL.

On **24 October** in a public statement I raised concern over an attack on a journalist with BuzzFeed and threats to storm the offices of Agence France Presse during a demonstration in Paris reportedly due to AFP’s editorial position on the conflict between Israel and Palestine. I welcome the swift response by law enforcement officers and expressed my trust that the authorities would bring the perpetrators of this attack to justice.

Georgia

On **11 August** I issued a public statement saying that court sanctions against the television channel Rustavi 2 were disproportionate and excessive and may pose a threat to free media and media pluralism. On August 5 the Tbilisi City Court issued an order freezing the assets of Rustavi 2 as an interim measure pending a verdict on an ownership dispute. The court order followed the filing of a civil lawsuit by a local businessman to reclaim shares he says he was forced to give up in 2006. I called on the authorities to ensure media pluralism in the country.

On 16 September I received a letter from Vice Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili saying that the government remains committed to improving the media environment and facilitating media pluralism. He also said that the government could not influence court proceedings.

On **28-30 September** I visited Tbilisi for the 12th South Caucasus Media Conference with the topic: Digitalization for Freedom of the Media.

During the visit I met with Chair of the Parliament David Usupashvili, Deputy Foreign Minister Khatuna Totladze and civil society representatives to discuss media freedom issues.

I reiterated my call to elect the final two members of the Supervisory Board of the Public Service Broadcaster to make it fully operational and complete investigations into illegal activities that impede media freedom, such as the surveillance incident with Rustavi 2 in 2014. I also noted the challenges faced by some private broadcasters stemming from ownership disputes and allegations of governmental pressure over editorial policies that are used for dismissing political programs.

I urged the authorities to preserve and enhance Georgia's internationally recognized progress on free expression and free media issues.

On **22 October** I issued a public statement again expressing my concern about the continued ownership dispute involving Rustavi 2 and its implications for media pluralism. Reportedly, the channel has been experiencing significant financial and logistical constraints, effectively limiting its capacity to operate freely, following the court decision in August.

I said that if not lifted soon, the court order would seriously restrict media plurality ahead of parliamentary elections scheduled for next year. I also noted statements by some high-level government officials on the matter which might negatively influence the court proceedings.

On 23 October I received a response from the authorities conveying the comment to the press made by Vice Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili regarding Rustavi 2. He said that media freedom is the ultimate value which governs the Georgian government and there is no interference with the broadcast policy of any media company.

I learned that on 3 November the court ruled in favor of a local businessman who reclaimed shares of the channel.

On **6 November** I issued a public statement saying that a court ruling ordering the replacement of the management at Rustavi 2 poses a threat to media freedom as it threatens the independence of a major media outlet's editorial policy. The temporary managers, among other executive powers, were told by the judge to exercise a change in the editorial policy. I said that editorial decisions should be made in newsrooms, not courtrooms and called on the judiciary to fully respect the right of Rustavi 2 to editorial independence.

On **16 November** upon official request, I met with Chair David Usupashvili and a group of members of Parliament in Vienna to discuss media freedom issues, including the recent developments around Rustavi 2 channel. I reiterated my call on the authorities to preserve and enhance a diverse, vibrant and pluralistic media landscape in the country. I was pleased to be assured by Chairman Usupashvili that Georgian authorities will continue to do their utmost to protect media freedom and will continue fruitful co-operation with my Office.

Germany

On **22 June** I issued a public statement calling on the authorities to release Ahmad Mansour, an Al Jazeera journalist who was detained at Berlin's Tegel airport on 20 June on the basis of an Egyptian arrest warrant. Mansour was convicted and sentenced to 15 years in prison by a Cairo court in absentia in 2014 on the charge of an alleged involvement in the torture of a lawyer on Tahrir Square in 2011. I said that the detention of journalists is a powerful tool to silence media critical of any government. Mansour was released in the evening of 22 June.

On **3 August** I wrote to Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and issued a public statement on 4 August warning about the negative effect on free media of a criminal investigation for treason against Netzpolitik.org stemming from the publication of news stories online about government surveillance plans. I said authorities should refrain from trailing the media whose job is to investigate and report on issues of public importance.

In a reply dated 18 August Foreign Minister Steinmeier said it was necessary to determine if the articles contained state secrets and whether publishing them would prejudice the Federal Republic of Germany or benefit a foreign power. He said that on 10 August the Federal Public Prosecutor General terminated the investigation the information published did not constitute a state secret as defined in the relevant section of the German Criminal Code, and since there was no proof of criminal intent.

On 1 October I issued a public statement saying that journalists' safety must be ensured following attacks on two reporters with Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk and Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten respectively during a demonstration. I recalled incidents earlier in the year when journalists were also attacked and demanded that law enforcement protect members of the media covering public events.

Holy See

On 23 November I issued a public statement calling on authorities to drop criminal charges against journalists Emiliano Fittipaldi and Gianluigi Nuzzi for "disclosure of information and documents that are of fundamental interests to the state of Vatican City" in connection with the publication of books alleging financial mismanagement and corruption in the Vatican City. If convicted they face up to eight years in prison. The trial began on 24 November. I said that journalists must be free to report on issues of public interest and to protect their confidential sources.

Hungary

On 6 July in a public statement I expressed concern about draft amendments to the Freedom of Information Act and called on Parliament to begin public discussions with all stakeholders to ensure that the changes would support, and not limit access to public information.

I noted the concerns of several Hungarian and international media NGOs about the amendments and recalled the importance of free access to information in order to guarantee transparency and accountability in public administration.

The amendments were adopted without changes by Parliament in early July.

On 17 September in a public statement I called upon Prime Minister Viktor Orban to instruct law enforcement officers to respect the rights of journalists reporting on issues of public interest, pointing to several incidents. On 12 September Associated Press cameraman Luca Muzi was briefly detained near the border town of Roszke by police who forced him to delete photos he took of a police dog threatening a Syrian refugee. On 16 September journalist Jacek Tacik from Poland's public broadcaster TVP was beaten by the police, suffered head injuries and was briefly arrested for illegally crossing the border; Members of the Serbian media outlet B92 suffered from tear gas fired at the refugees by the police while they were covering the events; cameraman Vladan Hadži Mijailović and sound engineer Miroslav Djurašinović, both from Radio Television of Serbia, were attacked by the police at the Horgos border crossing, and their colleague, reporter Jovana Djurović, suffered a hand injury.

On 6 November I took note of Hungary's decision to abandon a plan to require media outlets to add secret service agents from national security services to their staff. The draft

amendment to the National Security Act could have resulted in censorship of the media's work, self-censorship by journalists and exposure of journalists' confidential sources.

Iceland

On **3 July** I issued a public statement welcoming the decision of Parliament to decriminalize blasphemy. I said that Iceland had set an example to follow because blasphemy laws are incompatible with free expression and freedom of religion and that democracy requires the right to openly discuss every idea, dogma or belief even if it is shocking, disturbing or offensive.

In ending my two-day official visit to Reykjavik I issued a public statement on **8 September** in which I encouraged the authorities to continue their efforts to strengthen media freedom and pluralism in the country. The visit offered an excellent opportunity to discuss the Icelandic media situation first hand, mainly focusing on the challenges for the public service broadcaster to the country RUV, decriminalization of defamation laws and how to secure effective protection of media pluralism, including transparency of media ownership.

In my statement I noted that Iceland has a longstanding tradition of preserving and safeguarding free expression and free media, and these achievements need to be duly protected and preserved faced with current and new challenges. This was my first official visit and I had meetings with Foreign Minister Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson, Education, Science and Culture Minister Illugi Gunnarsson, a group of members of the Parliament, as well as the Union of Icelandic Journalists, the Icelandic Modern Media Institute, the Steering Committee for Freedom of Expression and Information and the Icelandic Media Commission. I also gave a lecture at the University of Iceland on the challenges to freedom of expression, offline and online.

Italy

On **20 August** I issued a public statement urging the authorities to offer better protection for members of the media following several unconnected attacks against journalists covering activities of organized crime groups and warned that the escalating trend of threats and acts of intimidation against journalists must be stopped. I referred to a report issued in August by the parliamentary anti-mafia commission which stated that attacks on investigative journalists reporting on organized crime have risen constantly since 2006 and that few assailants had been brought to justice.

Kazakhstan

On **23-24 September** I wrote to the authorities and on **25 September** issued a public statement expressing concern over several developments related to free media and free expression.

On 27 August the administrative court in Almaty fined and suspended ADAM magazine for three months for failure to publish materials in two languages, Kazakh and Russian, as stated in its registration certificate, which ruling was upheld by the appeals court. I said it is worrying that a minor administrative offence warrants excessive penalties that limit freedom of the media and pluralism of opinion and called on the authorities to reform legislation to remove disproportionate administrative penalties for minor administrative infractions.

I noted that on 8 September a district court in Almaty ordered Ayan Sharipbayev, editor of ADAM magazine, to pay approximately €180,000 to the Deputy Chair of the National Security Committee for insulting his honour and dignity. In another case, an appeals court on 27 August upheld a ruling of a district court ordering Guzal Baidalinova, a journalist and owner of the Nakanune.kz news website, to pay approximately €75,000 in damages to a private bank. The court found that one of the publications on a website had damaged the bank's reputation. I said that these cases clearly constitute restrictions on free media and free expression and expressed hope that the national judiciary would carefully reconsider all the cases.

I also expressed concern about the blocking of the independent online portals Ratel.kz and Zonakz.net which have been inaccessible since early September. Alternate domains used in an attempt to restore service also have been blocked. I urged the authorities to look into this issue and help re-establish access to these websites.

On 25 November the authorities responded and said technical problems caused the blocking of the sites zonakz.net and ratel.kz. I would like to commend the authorities for assisting the providers in resolving the problem by sending experts from the emergency services of the State technical Service. I am looking forward to full restoration of access to the sites.

On 13 October I wrote to the authorities expressing concern about reports of an assault on Bota Zhumanova, a blogger and journalist in Almaty. On 8 October Zhumanova was attacked and suffered serious injuries, including a broken nose and a concussion. I noted that police had launched an investigation and requested additional information

On 19 October I issued a public statement alerting the authorities that new legislation could limit the activities of NGOs, including media NGOs. On 23 September the lower chamber (the Majilis) of the Parliament adopted a law that would allow the government to have operational control over foreign grants and to identify priority areas for the NGOs, restricting it to a limited number of social programmes and projects. The list of priorities does not include media freedom.

I said that introducing legislation that would put NGOs under strict governmental supervision, including the control of foreign grants, is worrying for civil society actors in general. As the bill also introduces possibilities for the government to limit the priorities of the NGOs and exclude freedom of the media from their area of work, it could pose a clear threat to free media. I called on the members of the Senate to carefully review the provisions of the bill, in close co-operation with civil society, in order to avoid its arbitrary application and ensure an enabling legal, regulatory and policy environment for NGO activities, including those working on media freedom issues.

I learned that on 5 November the law was adopted by the Parliament.

On 27 October I issued a public statement condemning the shutdown of yet another media outlet, a move that could further limit free expression and free media. On 22 October the district court in Almaty, upon the request of the Prosecutor's Office, ruled to annul ADAM magazine's registration certificate following a minor administrative offence that I earlier raised with the authorities. Reportedly, the court also ordered the closure of the Facebook page of the magazine.

I said that the punitive practice of unduly obstructing free expression and free media in Kazakhstan should be reversed immediately. Any sanctions limiting such freedoms must be thoroughly assessed and are only acceptable if they comply with established international standards, proportionate and necessary for the protection of the fundamental rights of others. I also reiterated my call on the authorities to review legislation restricting media activities and, as necessary, repeal or amend disproportionately prohibitive provisions.

On 11 November I noted reports that access to the blog platform LiveJournal has been restored. Access to the platform had been blocked for more than four years by court decision. (See Regular Report to the Permanent Council of 29 March 2012).

On **24 November** I wrote to the authorities to point out disproportionate sentences handed down by courts in cases against the newspaper Jas Alash and bloggers Bolatbek Blyalov and Igor Sychev.

On **25 November** I issued a public statement commending the Law on Access to Information that went into effect on 18 November, but noted that it still had several drawbacks that needed to be addressed, including that some provisions of the law remain vague and restricted in scope, which could weaken the law's overall effect. Among them are norms which regulate access to meetings, exceptions to the right of access to information to other laws and the general lack of provisions for an independent supervisory body dealing with complaints.

Kyrgyzstan

On **13 November** I wrote to Chair of the Jogorku Kenesh Asulbek Jeenbekov expressing concern about reports that several journalists had been prevented from entering the Jogorku Kenesh building to cover the parliament's work based on uncertain accreditation difficulties. I encouraged the authorities to refrain from imposing undue limitations on the work of journalists because accreditation should not deprive media of their ability to work and get direct access to information from state institutions.

On 19 November I learned that the journalists in question were officially denied accreditation by the Jogorku Kenesh.

Latvia

On **30 June** I issued a public statement calling for respect of the media regulator's independence following a proposal in Parliament to dismiss the National Electronic Mass Media Council. I said that any decision not based on law governing the work of the independent regulator could be seen as interference with their decision-making process. I later learned that the Parliament voted to dismiss the chairperson of the Council, a decision that is now being challenged in court.

In a letter of 15 July Minister of Foreign Affairs Edgar Rinkēvičs responded to my letter of 8 June (See Regular Report to the Permanent Council of 18 June 2015) in which I inquired about the status in the case of Leonids Jakobson, an investigative journalist who was attacked and suffered serious injuries in March 2012. Rinkēvičs wrote that the investigation is ongoing and they remain hopeful that the perpetrators would be found.

Lithuania

In a public statement on **9 July** I lauded reforms in the laws on defamation following the Parliament's approval on 25 June to remove two provisions in the Criminal Code that criminalized libel. I said that this was a positive step, but Lithuania should go further in its reform ambitions and fully decriminalize defamation as such laws have the potential to restrain members of the media from reporting on issues that are in the public's interest.

On **18 September** I wrote to the authorities to raise the issue of Russian journalist Galina Sapozhnikova, who was denied entry to Lithuania on 26 August when arriving on a plane from Tallin. Reportedly she has been declared persona non grata by the Lithuanian authorities for a period of five years.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

On **16 July** I issued a public statement about a recent attack and threat against a journalist by the VMRO-DPMNE political party. The editor and owner of the online news portal Maktel, Sase Ivanovski, was physically attacked on 15 July by Deputy Prime Minister Vladimir Pesevski, during questioning. Deputy Prime Minister Pesevski publicly apologized in a statement on his official Facebook page. However, following the incident, the VMRO-DPMNE party issued a press release chastising the journalist for being provocative and adding that journalists would bear the consequences if they jeopardize the privacy, freedom and rights of any individual. I said it is appalling that the ruling party condemned the journalist and not the attack itself.

On **23 July** I wrote to Foreign Minister Nikola Poposki and issued a public statement about recent attacks on journalists. On 21 July the editor of the web portal Dokaz, Marjan Stamenkovski, was physically attacked and suffered severe injuries. On 28 June an ORF reporter was attacked at the Greek border by a national policeman who attempted to confiscate her camera and other equipment. I urged the authorities to publicly condemn these attacks and conduct swift and transparent investigations.

Montenegro

On 16 June I received a letter from Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and European Integration Igor Luksić responding to my request for information on the investigation into the attacks on journalists Zorica Bulatović and Milovan Novović. He said the matter was a priority for police and assured me that the government is committed to promoting democratic values including media freedom.

On **19 June** I wrote to Foreign Minister Luksić to welcome the conviction of five people for an attack on Lidija Nikcević, a journalist with the newspaper DAN. I also expressed concern about a threat against Alma Ljuca, a correspondent for the newspaper Dnevne Novine. On 12 June her car was demolished in front of her home, which was the third such incident in Montenegro recently. I urged that the attacks be investigated.

On **6-7 July** I paid an official visit to Montenegro to meet with Prime Minister Milo Đukanović and the Montenegrin Working Group on self-regulation. I welcomed a new draft Code of Ethics for journalists developed by representatives of the Media Council for Self-

regulation, the daily newspapers DAN and Vijesti, and the weekly newspaper Monitor, with the assistance of experts from my Office and with the support from the Council of Europe.

During my meeting on 6 July with Prime Minister Đukanović, we discussed the importance of the fight to end impunity for attacks against journalists and welcomed his commitment to improve journalists' safety and media freedom. I said that all attacks against journalists, including the murder of Duško Jovanović, are fully investigated and perpetrators and masterminds are brought to justice.

On **18 October** I issued a public statement expressing concern about the arrests of two journalists in Podgorica. On 17 October Dražen Živković, a journalist with DAN, and Gojko Raičević, editor of the IN4S news portal, were detained while covering public protest in Podgorica and while initially facing misdemeanour charges, they were subsequently released.

I said that the media must be able to report freely on matters of public interest and law enforcement agencies are responsible for protecting journalists.

On **19 October** I issued a public statement calling for investigation into the attack on a media property in Podgorica, and urged the authorities to investigate attacks on the media. On 18 October stones were thrown at the office of TV Pink M and editor Ivana Drobnjak was injured. Police have started an investigation and a suspect has been arrested.

Moldova

On **23 July** I wrote to Chairman of Parliament Andrian Candu and on **3 August** issued a public statement presenting a legal analysis of two draft laws amending provisions of the Audiovisual Code, which was requested by officials. It was suggested by the expert conducting the legal review that the analysis should be read together with the April report (see Regular Report to the Permanent Council of 18 June 2015). It said that it is difficult and often counterproductive to try to limit certain speech by excessively restrictive legislation and offered several practical recommendations to bring the proposed legislation in line with OSCE media freedom commitments.

(See Legal reviews)

On **29 July** I wrote to Foreign Minister Natalia Gherman expressing concern regarding attacks on the crews of Jurnal TV and the Omega news portal on 24 July in Chisinau. According to media reports, journalists of both media outlets were physically assaulted and a camera was damaged by a group of men while covering a peaceful protest. I said it is alarming that the attacks took place in the presence of law enforcement officers who reportedly did not intervene. I expressed hope that these incidents will be given due attention by the authorities and requested more information on the case.

On **10 September** I wrote to the authorities about the denial of entry to Moldova for members of the media, including, representatives of several Russian outlets.

According to reports, on 7 September Alexei Amelyushkin, a producer with the Ruptly news agency, was refused entry at the Chisinau airport. On the same day, Alexei Kazannikov and Natalya Kalysheva, journalists with LifeNews channel, were also denied entry. According to reports, some of the journalists' equipment also was seized. While the reasons for such

excessive actions remained unclear, I noted reports that, in the case of Amelyushkin, the authorities said he failed to produce accreditation. I said accreditation is not a work permit and a lack of one should not deprive journalists of their ability to work.

I also noted that on 9 September at the Chisinau airport border service representatives, in addition to a number of unidentified people, reportedly briefly detained, searched and interrogated Ilya Azar, a journalist with the Meduza news portal. The journalist claimed that his work-related recordings were taken and copied during the course of the incident.

I urged the respective authorities to refrain from imposing unnecessary limitations on the work of journalists which affect the free flow of information and free media.

On **6 October** I wrote to the authorities again about the denial of entry for Russian media into Moldova.

According to reports, correspondent Yevgeny Zuyev, cameraman Sergei Korenkov and sound engineer Vladislav Petrov, employees of the Russian TV channel NTV, were denied entry at the Chisinau airport on 3 October. On 4 October, another NTV crew, led by correspondent Anton Talpa, was also denied entry; reportedly on the basis they did not have accreditation and official authorization from the Ministry of Press.

I once again urged the authorities to refrain from imposing unnecessary limitations on the work of journalists and allow them to travel unhindered. Unfortunately the practice continued and I learned that on 7 October the crew with Rossiya 24 channel was reportedly denied entry to the country.

On **13 November** I received a reply from the authorities to my letters regarding the denial of entry for Russian media professionals. The letter says the denials of entry were issued in accordance with national law and in response to incitement of hostility, violence or hate speech. Moreover in most cases the journalists did not inform properly the border police about the actual purpose of the visits. The government reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to freedom of the media and the free exercise of journalism and said it does not limit in any artificial way the work of the Russian media in the country, that a number of their journalists are accredited in Moldova and that in all 60 TV channels from the Russian Federation are rebroadcast through cable networks.

Mongolia

On **22 July** I issued a public statement indicating that the arrest on criminal defamation charges of Sodnomdarjaa Battulga, a journalist with Info.mn news website, was disproportionate and excessive. According to reports, Battulga was arrested on 9 July following a complaint filed by a director of a local trading business for allegedly insulting article written by the journalist in June 2013. I reiterated my call to bring defamation provisions in line with international standards and to immediately release Battulga.

According to reports, on 27 July the journalist was fined approximately €9,000. The case has been submitted to the appeals court.

Norway

On **24 November** I issued a public statement welcoming a ruling by the Supreme Court requiring police to return film footage of radicalized Norwegian youth that was seized without a warrant from a filmmaker in Oslo. The court concluded that the unpublished material could reveal confidential sources and the film project lies at the core of investigative journalism and that it addresses a serious problem with a high degree of public interest. I said the ruling sends a strong signal for the need to protect investigative journalism in order to secure the public's right to information.

Poland

On **23 June** I issued a public statement condemning the killing of journalist Łukasz Masiak, who on 14 June was brutally beaten and later died at a local hospital. I called on the authorities to thoroughly investigate the circumstances of the case.

In a letter of 15 July the authorities said a European arrest warrant had been issued on the alleged identified perpetrator. The killing did not appear to be motivated by Masiak's work as a journalist.

On **14 September** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Grzegorz Schetyna about a draft Information Security Doctrine that was presented by the National Security Bureau on 24 July. I expressed my concern that the doctrine, if adopted, may lead to undue limitations on free expression and the media's right to work freely. I said it was problematic that the threats to the country's information security were described in a broad and ambiguous language, and subject to arbitrary interpretation. The notion of propaganda was not properly described, which also poses a risk of setting undue limitations on media content.

Russian Federation

On **19 June** I wrote to the authorities in response to a letter of 8 June which raised media freedom issues in countries other than the Russian Federation. In particular, the authorities raised the issue of legislation in Lithuania and Moldova and the treatment of Russian journalists in Moldova. I also expressed a readiness for meaningful co-operation with the authorities in enabling media freedom in Russia.

On **25 June** I wrote to the authorities regarding reports that Simon Ostrovsky, a U.S. citizen and investigative journalist with Vice News, has been denied a temporary Russian press visa on 4 June. I said that this denial would deprive the journalist from pursuing his professional activity and expressed hope that his request for the visa would be given careful and favorable consideration.

On **14 July** I issued a public statement expressing concern about President Vladimir Putin's approval of amendments to the Law on Information, Information Technologies and Protection of Information which requires Internet search engines to delete information upon request of individuals. I said that the law, worded in broad and vague terms, has great potential to negatively affect the free flow of information online and access to information, damage the universality of the Internet and eventually result in content restrictions by private entities.

On **25 June** I wrote to the authorities expressing concern on the then draft law and asked them to arrange for consultations with all stakeholders to properly evaluate its possible effects.

On 21 July I received a reply from the authorities indicating that the amendments are in full compliance with the international law and the OSCE commitments.

On **14 July** I wrote to the authorities to express my concern over reports about an attack on Yevgeny Khamaganov, a well-known journalist and editor at the Asia Russia Daily online information agency in the Republic of Buryatia. According to reports, Khamaganov was beaten at the entrance to his house in Ulan-Ude on 12 July. He was hospitalized and diagnosed with serious brain and neck injuries. Some reports allege that the attack could be linked to the journalist's professional activity.

On **19 August** I wrote in response to a letter of 27 July from the authorities raising issues involving Russian journalists and media outlets in countries other than the Russian Federation, including Moldova, Poland, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. The authorities expressed concern that these matters were not publicly raised by me.

I reiterated that in line with my Mandate it is my prerogative to choose the appropriate manner and instrument with which to address media freedom related issues in the OSCE region. I said that some of the cases have already been addressed in the report to the Permanent Council (FOM.GAL/2/15/Rev.1) and reiterated in a letter to the authorities of 19 June 2015. In addition, I referred the authorities to my Communiqué on denial of entry of journalists from one OSCE participating State to another” (3 April 2014, see <http://www.osce.org/ru/fom/117109>).

On **7 October** on the ninth anniversary of the death of Novaya Gazeta journalist Anna Politkovskaya, I issued a public statement calling on the government to end impunity for crimes committed against journalists. In June 2014 sentences were handed down to five individuals for the murder of Politkovskaya, but the investigation has the masterminds of the crime have not been discovered.

On **20 November** I issued a public statement deploring the decision of authorities to include the media nongovernmental organization Glasnost Defence Foundation a “foreign agent” under Russian law. The designation means that the organization has been deemed to engage in political activity and receive foreign funds. I said the Foundation has worked tirelessly for 25 years to protect and advocate for the rights of journalists in Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States region and labelling it as a foreign agent is a serious obstruction to the important work media NGOs carry out and a threat to media pluralism in the Russian Federation.

Serbia

On **18 August** I issued a public statement condemning an attack on Predrag Blagojević, editor of the news portal Južne Vesti in Niš by a law enforcement officer. I welcomed the announcement of an investigation of the incident by the authorities and the condemnation of the attack by journalists' associations in Serbia.

On **24 August** I wrote to Minister of Culture and Information Ivan Tasovac regarding a growing number of death threats received by Stefan Cvetković, a freelance journalist from Bela Crkva. I requested information on the progress of the investigation.

On 8 October I received a reply from Minister Tasovac providing detailed information on developments. It is important to ensure perpetrators and masterminds behind such crimes are brought to justice to affirm the government's commitment to freedom of expression and safety of journalists.

On **12 October** I wrote to Minister Tasovac to express concern over recent incidents including an attack on 27 August on Ivan Ninić in front of his home by two assailants armed with metal rods. On 25 September local law enforcement officers prevented four journalists of the Istinomer.rs online news portal from reporting about an upcoming protest against the Belgrade Waterfront Project. On 26 September journalist Dejan Crnomarković was threatened with bodily harm and had all of his car tires slashed. Also, on 27 September police reportedly prevented journalist Bozidar Andrejić from reporting at a protest against the Belgrade Waterfront project. Most recently, Danilo Redzepović, editor of the online news portal Teleprompter, was questioned by law enforcement officers in an attempt to learn his source for an article published on 30 September.

I requested information on the progress of the investigations in the cases.

Slovenia

On 23 September I received a letter from Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Karl Erjavec in response to my call in February to amend the criminal code relating to prosecution of journalists for criminal defamation. Foreign Minister Erjavec said that the National Assembly amended the code, providing a defence of public interest in the cases of disclosure of classified information. I welcome the amendment especially because in the last 12 months five journalists had been indicted or faced the threat of charges for reporting on issues of public interest.

Tajikistan

On 19-20 November I visited Dushanbe for the 17th Central Asia Media Conference with the topic: Digitalization for Freedom of the Media.

During the visit I met with Foreign Minister Sirojiddin Aslov to discuss media freedom issues.

I welcomed the government's efforts in decriminalizing defamation in 2012 and encouraged the authorities to abolish the remaining criminal law provisions that provide specific protection for high-level government representatives.

In addition, I stressed the need to reform the law "On periodical press and other mass media" in order to strengthen journalists' rights and enhance the editorial independence of media outlets.

I also expressed concern about the regular and often unannounced, blocking of websites and social networks saying that any restrictions must be clearly defined by law, be proportionate and based on a court decision.

I further encouraged the authorities to ensure that all journalists are free from governmental pressure and have unhindered access to official information of public interest. I also expressed the readiness of my Office to assist Tajikistan on the digital switchover process and other media freedom issues.

Turkey

On **16 July** I wrote to then Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu to share a copy of the updated study commissioned by my Office on imprisoned journalists in the country as well as a summary of the laws most often used to curb freedom of expression and media freedom. The study, the first version of which was commissioned by my Office in 2011 and updated yearly, was also made public on the same day.

I noted that 21 members of the media were in prison and many more journalists and social media users faced trials that could result in prison sentences. The study highlighted the continued need to reform the laws criminalizing freedom of expression, as well as implementation by the courts. I noted that the majority of recent changes have been used to further limit the right to express critical ideas. During its drafting, the study was shared with the Ministry of Justice for comments; I appreciated their constructive approach and willingness to exchange information.

The research, available at <http://www.osce.org/fom/173036>, showed that media outlets reporting about sensitive issues continue to be often regarded by the authorities and courts as supportive of terrorism. Acknowledging the legitimate right of governments to fight terrorism, I noted that this fight can only be successful by guaranteeing citizens the right of media to report on all issues of public interest and the people's right to comment on those issues. I said that intimidation of journalists and social media users by high-ranking public officials had become widespread practice. I urged Turkey to embark upon a comprehensive reform of the related laws, including the Criminal Code, the Anti-Terror Law and the Internet Law and offered my Office's assistance.

On **21 August** I issued a public statement seeking a transparent and swift investigation into the attack on Murat Sancak, head of the Star Media Group, whose car was fired on in Istanbul on 20 August. The police have launched an investigation. I emphasized the importance of public condemnation by the authorities of any acts of violence against journalists to send a clear message that violence against the media is not tolerated.

I noted a statement by the Istanbul Police Department on 18 October indicating the attack was carried out by a criminal organization.

On **31 August** I issued a public statement calling on the authorities to respect journalists' rights and refrain from actions that can hinder the freedom to report about issues of public importance, following the detention of three journalists accused of supporting terrorist groups. On 27 August British journalists Jake Hanrahan and Philip Pendlebury, both from Vice News, and their Turkey-based colleague, Mohammed Ismael Rasool, were covering developments in Diyarbakir in southeastern Turkey, when they were taken into custody by

the authorities. Their hotel rooms were searched and some of their equipment was confiscated. The two British journalists were released on 6 September; Rasool is still in custody. My Office continues to monitor the case.

On 1 October I issued a public statement condemning an attack on journalist Ahmet Hakan and said that violence against journalists is unacceptable and must be fought with the full vigour of the law. The Hürriyet columnist was attacked on 1 October outside his home in Istanbul. Four people beat him and his bodyguard. The journalist sustained multiple injuries, including a broken nose and ribs.

Police arrested three suspects the same day. I welcomed the arrests and the condemnation of the attack by public officials, adding that much more needed to be done to stop such incidents. I said that on 6 September and 8 September, the headquarters of Hürriyet were attacked and damaged and during the same time Hakan received several threats for his work from media outlets and even from one member of Parliament.

On 20 October I issued a public statement expressing condolences over the death of journalist Jacky Sutton and urged the authorities for an investigation. On 17 October, Sutton, Iraq director for the Institute of War and Peace Reporting, former BBC journalist, and a long-time advocate for media freedom around the world, was found dead at Istanbul's Atatürk Airport. The swift investigation of the authorities showed that she had acted on her own and no other people were involved.

On 28 October I issued a public statement criticizing a police raid against television channels Kanaltürk and Bugün TV of the İpek Media Group, during which special operations forces detained journalists, used tear gas and water cannons against them and their supporters outside of the building and took the channels off the air. I emphasized that the raid, carried out in early morning on 28 October, was a clear obstruction of media freedom. I urged the authorities to ensure that the media be able to work freely and in a safe environment, particularly during an election period. I said that access to information is indispensable in any democracy and that the stations should be able to resume broadcasting immediately.

My Office continued to monitor other incidents which affect media freedom and free expression. They include several recent detentions and arrests of journalists and social media users, the firing of staff of various media outlets and the frequency which Article 299 of the Criminal Code on insulting the president has been used against people expressing critical views, including journalists and social media users.

Turkmenistan

On 29 July I wrote to the authorities and on **12 August** issued a public statement conveying concern about the detention of Saparmamed Nepeskuliev, a freelance journalist with Azatlyk Radiosy (the RFE/RL Turkmen Service) and Alternativnie Novosti Turkmenistana news portal, by law enforcement representatives on 7 July in Balkan Province. The reasons behind his detention were unclear. According to reports, Nepeskuliev's family was not allowed to meet with him and the journalist has not been provided with legal counsel. I called on the authorities to release the journalist.

On 17 August I received a reply from the authorities informing that Nepeskuliev was detained on the illegal drug possession charges.

On **3 September** I wrote to the authorities in response to Foreign Ministry's note verbale of 1 September regarding my statement on the detention of Nepeskuliev. The Ministry informed me that the journalist was sentenced to three years in prison on 31 August.

Ukraine

On **19 June** I wrote to Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada Volodymyr Groysman in connection with the draft law concerning information restrictions on the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The bill makes it a criminal act, punishable with prison terms, to provide "information support for terrorism" and bans the dissemination of the "ideology of terrorism and information aimed at promoting or justifying terrorism." I expressed concern that the imprecise language of the proposed law may subjectively expose people to criminal liability for exercising their right to free expression. This could include members of the media in the normal course of their work and, thus, could be harmful to free media.

In addition, the draft law prohibits the dissemination of certain types of information related to the ongoing conflict without prior clearance by the operational command, even if such information unclassified. I said that such a requirement is excessive and would hinder free access to information and may also seriously undermine the ability of journalists covering the conflict to report in a free and timely manner on issues of public importance.

On 22 September I received a response from the authorities saying that the Committee on Freedom of Speech and Information Policy of Verkhovna Rada carefully examined my letter and decided to propose to the Committee on Law Enforcement Activity to recommend to the Verkhovna Rada to reject the draft law. The proposal is still pending in the Verkhovna Rada.

On **30 June** I wrote to the authorities and requested information regarding reports about two attacks on members of the media. On 25 June Sergey Kolodyazhnyi, editor-in-chief of the Vestnik Kominternovo newspaper, was beaten by a group of assailants in the village of Kryzhaniivka in the Odesa Oblast. On 22 June Maryna Vyshynska, journalist with the local TV channel SK1 on assignment in Zhytomyr, sustained head injuries after being hit by an unidentified assailant.

On **2 July** I wrote to the authorities about Alexandra Cherepnina, a journalist with Russian TV Channel One, who was reportedly detained by Security Service officers in Kyiv on 1 July, expelled from Ukraine on the same day and banned from entering the country for three years. I asked the authorities to provide details about the matter.

On **10 July** I wrote to Minister of Information Policy Yuriy Stets and on **22 July** issued a public statement presenting a legal analysis of the draft Information Security Concept, commissioned by my Office upon a government request. I welcomed the transparency and openness of the process to create the document, but stressed that certain provisions of the draft Concept could have a chilling effect on media and hinder its important watchdog role. I expressed hope that the proposed analysis and recommendations would be carefully considered by the Ministry.

On **20 July** I also joined Minister Stets **by** video link for a press conference about the legal analysis.

(See Legal reviews)

On **27 August** I wrote to Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin regarding continuing concerns over the safety of journalists and lack of progress in investigating crimes committed against members of the media. I noted a statement highlighting these concerns and an appeal addressed to President Petro Poroshenko by various Ukrainian journalist organizations on 27 August. I asked the authorities to take these issues seriously and boost investigations into attacks. I also said that addressing the issue of impunity for crimes against members of the media is a key step in promoting a culture of respect for and understanding of the important role journalists play in any democratic society.

On a separate note, I called the Foreign Minister's attention to the ban on the import of certain books to Ukraine. On 12 August the State Fiscal Service of Ukraine declared 38 books "anti-Ukrainian" and prohibited them from being imported. Reportedly, this measure was taken with the objective of "preventing the application of methods of information war and disinformation to the citizens of Ukraine, the dissemination of the ideology of hatred, fascism, xenophobia and separatism and terminating encroachments on the territorial integrity and the state structure as defined by the Constitution of Ukraine."

I reiterated the importance of upholding the principles of rule of law, necessity and proportionality when introducing restrictions on information, including those driven by a legitimate desire to protect national security. I called on the authorities to stop administrative restrictions of this kind and to ensure that concerns regarding inflammatory speech be addressed through relevant judicial procedures and media literacy for people.

On **31 August** I issued a public statement expressing concern about the incident involving journalists near the Parliament. According to reports, journalists with the television stations 1+1, Channel 5, as well as reporters from other media outlets, were injured when protesters attacked law enforcement officers in front of the building. I asked for a swift investigation into the case, as well as all earlier cases of attacks against journalists. I noted that the authorities made a number of arrests tied to the incident.

On **16 September** on the 15th anniversary of the disappearance of prominent Ukrainian journalist Georgyi Gongadze, I issued a public statement reiterating my call on the authorities to fully investigate the crime. Gongadze went missing in September 2001 and was later found dead outside Kyiv. I said that the masterminds behind this vicious crime must be brought to justice, as the journalist's murder continues to hinder free expression and free media.

I also noted the lack of progress in the investigations of at least nine killings and numerous attacks against members of the media since the start of the conflict in and around the country.

On **17 September** I issued a public statement expressing concern about sanctions banning several dozen foreign journalists from entering Ukraine. I said that introducing overly broad restrictions that curb the free movement of journalists is a severe threat to their rights to freely collect information. On 16 September President Poroshenko signed a decree introducing sanctions against several hundred companies and individuals that pose a "threat to national interests" or promote "terrorist activities." The decree also listed members of the media, primarily originating from OSCE participating States, including the United Kingdom, Germany and Russia and bans them from entry into Ukraine. I called on the president to amend the decree and exclude journalists from it.

On 18 September I learned that president approved changes to the decree and excluded six journalists representing BBC, Frankfurter Allgemeine, Die Zeit, Quatro, El Pais and El Confidencial from the sanction list. There are now more than 30 members of the media on the list.

On **30 September** I wrote to the authorities expressing concern about reported restrictions on the work of journalists from the Ukrainian military and security authorities. I urged the authorities to carefully address this matter in order to avoid introducing undue restrictions on the work of journalists. I noted that certain steps have already been taken, including discussions with representatives of media NGOs initiated by the Ministry of Information Policy. I also noted reports about the decisions by the General Staff and the Ministry of Defense to reform the armed forces' press services and to set up a working group involving journalists and military communications officers to find solutions to the issue.

I also raised an incident involving Yekaterina Voronina, a correspondent of the Russian TV channel NTV, who was, according to reports, detained on 24 September near the town of Kalanchak in Kherson Oblast where she was covering events related to crossing issues into the Crimean peninsula. She was reportedly interrogated for nine hours, including by Ukrainian Security Service officials; her personal belongings were searched, her mobile phone was seized and video materials were erased. According to reports, Voronina was released.

On **1 October** I issued a public statement welcoming the adoption of law aimed at ensuring transparency of media ownership. On 10 September President Poroshenko signed the law "On Amendments to Several Laws of Ukraine on Ensuring the Transparency of Media Ownership and Implementing the Principles of State Policy in the Sphere of Television and Radio Broadcasting." The amendments require broadcast companies and program service providers to disclose detailed information about their ownership structure and end beneficiaries. The law also bans business entities and individuals registered in the offshore economic zones to establish and own broadcast companies and program service providers. Further, the amendments enhance the transparency of the activities of the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council and task it to announce detailed explanations of all licensing-related decisions.

On **16 October** I wrote to the authorities conveying concern over reports about several cases of attacks on journalists and media property in Ukraine.

Reportedly, on 13 October the office of the newspaper Za Nashu Peremohu in the town of Oleksandria in Kirovohrad Oblast was attacked with a hand grenade and was seriously damaged. On 2 October in Kyiv, journalist Mykhailo Tkach and cameraman Kyrilo Lazarevych who work for the investigative program Skhemy, a joint project of Radio Liberty and the First National Channel, were attacked and detained by Security Service (SBU) officials near the SBU headquarters. Their camera was reportedly damaged. The journalists were released on the same day. In an incident which took place in Mykolaiv Oblast on 18 September, journalists Vadym Bohdanov and Valeriy Fedchenko with the Prestupnosti.net news website were attacked by a group of Ukrainian military servicemen while reporting on a car accident.

I noted reports that criminal proceedings have been launched into the incidents and requested additional information.

I also noted reports of several incidents when reporting activities were hampered by representatives of territorial election commissions in the run-up to local elections in Ukraine.

On 19 October I received a letter from the authorities providing information on several cases I have raised in the reporting period, as well as the statistics of investigations related to hindering professional activities of journalists.

On **24 November** I issued a public statement welcoming the adoption of a law that will pave the way for ending state and communal ownership of print media concerns. The law will give priority to editorial staff to assume ownership roles, which I said would increase competition and ensure editorial independence from interference by public authorities.

I note with satisfaction reports that a pre-trial investigation into the killing of journalist Alexander Kuchinskiy, chief editor of the newspaper Crime Express, and his wife in Donetsk Oblast in November 2014, has been completed and the suspect identified. I have been following this matter since the event occurred a year ago.(See Regular Report to the Permanent Council of 18 June 2015). I trust that the perpetrator of this crime will receive fair punishment.

United Kingdom

On **29 October** I issued a public statement warning that the United Kingdom's anti-terrorism law should not be used to access information, communications or a reporter's professional material because of the possible chilling effect of the law on investigative journalism. Police used the Terrorism Act of 2000 to obtain a court order to seize the computer of BBC journalist Secunder Kermani to read his exchanges with a member of ISIS.

I said that anti-terror legislation should not be used to make an end run around journalists' right to preserve their assets and materials, particularly those related to communications with their sources.

On **10 November** I issued a public statement asking Parliament to exercise great caution and give ample consideration to the right to freedom of information and free expression when debating a draft bill that could increase the surveillance powers of law enforcement authorities.

The proposed Investigatory Powers Bill among other things gives law enforcement agencies the right to collect and require Internet service providers to maintain users' connection data for up to a year, which could lead to the disclosure of journalists' sources. I said legislation should include guarantees that confidentiality of journalists' sources would not be compromised.

United States

On **11 August** I issued a public statement criticizing the decision to go forward with criminal charges against two journalists arrested while covering protests in suburban St. Louis in August 2014. The journalists, Washington Post reporter Wesley Lowery and Ryan Reilly of

the Huffington Post, were charged by the St. Louis County prosecutor with trespassing and interfering with an officer.

On **26 August** I issued a public statement condemning the deadly shooting of a television journalist and a cameraman in Virginia, apparently by a disgruntled employee of the station. I offered condolences to the victims' families.

Projects and activities since the last report

Legal reviews

Moldova

On **23 July** I wrote to Chairman of Parliament Andrian Candu and on **3 August** issued a public statement presenting the legal analysis of two draft laws amending provisions of the Audiovisual Code. The analysis was carried out by Professor Katrin Nyman Metcalf of Tallinn Law School at Tallinn University of Technology, an independent communications law expert. The expert suggested that the analysis should be read together with the April report (see Regular Report to the Permanent Council of 18 June 2015).

The expert noted approvingly that the latest draft laws contain fewer ambiguous provisions vis-à-vis the proposed April amendments. There are provisions strengthening the position of domestic content and protection of the official language, which is a normal practice in many European states, provided they are proportional measures. However, the expert again stressed that it is difficult and often counterproductive to try to limit certain speech (propaganda) by excessively restrictive legislation.

The analysis offered several important recommendations to bring the proposed legislation in line with OSCE media freedom commitments, including:

- language of proposed legal amendments should be more precise to avoid the possibility of broad interpretation;
- provisions regarding sanctions should be more clear and respect the principle of proportionality;
- restrictions regarding certain programs must fall within narrowly prescribed categories;
- propaganda should be countered with information, rather than content restrictions.

The analysis also recommends the elimination of the proposed amendment to the Law on Freedom of Expression to prevent dissemination of materials from anonymous authors stressing that the decision to publish anonymous materials should be an editorial decision and not a legal mandate.

Ukraine

On **10 July** I wrote to Minister of Information Policy Yuriy Stets and on **22 July** issued a public statement presenting a legal analysis of the draft Information Security Concept, commissioned by my Office upon an official request. I welcomed the transparency and openness of the process to create the document, but stressed that despite the authorities'

legitimate concerns regarding information security, certain provisions of the draft Concept could have a chilling effect on media and hinder its important watchdog role.

The analysis, carried out by Professor Katrin Nyman Metcalf, indicated the following main recommendations based on international standards and OSCE commitments:

- The existing rules on freedom of expression and their lawful limitations should be effectively applied, instead of introducing new binding rules and interpretative comments;
- The authorities should not be given broad powers which might limit freedom of expression and freedom of the media;
- The Concept shall not indicate that the state will be involved in creating media content or through regulation excessively influencing it;
- The Concept shall not indicate that, in balancing freedom of expression against possible reasons for restricting this freedom, there should be a presumption of allowing restrictions;
- Prohibitions on compromising authorities should be deleted from the document;
- The Concept cannot be interpreted as depriving foreign media of any rights;
- The mandate and tasks of the National Security and Defence Council appear to be too broad, which could interfere with the tasks of other public institutions in the media sphere such as the independent broadcasting regulator.

European Court of Human Rights judgment

On **17 June** I issued a public statement warning about the possible negative impact of the European Court of Human Rights' ruling in the case *Delfi AS v. Estonia* which held that the news portal Delfi may be held responsible for anonymous and allegedly defamatory comments from its readers. I said the decision should not be used by participating States to introduce imprecise and vague liability regulations which may limit the right of freedom of expression on the Internet nor should the ruling be used to limit open discussion and dissemination of ideas.

Visits and participation in events

On **18 June** my Office took part in the 2015 Eastern Europe Regional Meeting of OSCE Heads of Field Operations in **Kyiv**.

On **22-24 June** I attended the Deutsche Welle Global Media Forum 2015 in **Bonn** and participated in the plenary session "Foreign policy in 140 characters: How technology is redefining diplomacy."

On **25 June** I hosted a tweetchat with different stakeholders, including journalists, to identify responses to the growing trend of digital threats and online abuse of female journalists.

On **30 June-1 July** my Office participated in the OSCE-wide Counter-Terrorism Expert Conference in **Vienna** and moderated one of the panel discussions focusing on efforts to counter incitement and recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters while ensuring freedom of the media and freedom of expression.

On **29 June-3 July** I made my first official visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On **29-30 June** my Office attended the Armenia Forum organized by the International Institute of Communications in **Yerevan** and spoke on the panel “Consumer, cultural and citizen protection in a convergent world.”

On **1-4 July** my Office participated in the Annenberg-Oxford Media Policy Summer Institute in **Oxford** organized by the Center for Global Communication Studies at the Annenberg School for Communications of the University of Pennsylvania and lectured on international standards on freedom of expression and freedom of the media.

On **2 July** my Office spoke at an international workshop organized by the Italy-based media freedom observatory Ossigeno per l'Informazione and the Leipzig-based newly established "European Centre for Freedom of the Press and Media" which took place in **Rome** under the patronage of the Senate of the Republic and the Italian Order of Journalists and the National Federation of Italian Press, FNSI, and with the support of the European Commission. The workshop “Protect who reports inconvenient truths” addressed limitations to press freedom, including defamation charges against journalists, in Italy and Europe. Other European participants were the Association of European Journalists, the European Federation of Journalists, and the South East Europe Media Forum.

On **6 July** the Director of my Office gave a guest lecture at the 11th International Summer School on Media Law at Mohyla University in **Kyiv** on the limitations of propaganda for war and hatred in international law.

On **6 July** I participated in a meeting in **Podgorica** to present a new draft code of ethics for Montenegrin journalists, which was developed with assistance from my Office.

On **14 July** my Office spoke at the OSCE Summer School at the Hofburg in **Vienna**.

On **16-17 July** my Office participated in the “Workshop on reviewing evaluation instruments of implementation of OSCE Human Dimension Commitments” in **Berlin** organized by the Civic Solidarity Platform and the German Federal Foreign Office and spoke about reporting activities by my Office, including OSCE-wide reports and country visits.

On **20-21 July** my Office participated in a conference “Freedom of expression, media freedoms and (self) censorship in the OSCE area” in **Belgrade** organized by the Civic Solidarity Platform.

On **26 August** I participated in a workshop at the Ambassador’s Conference in the Foreign Ministry in **Berlin** to discuss media developments in the digital era, how freedom of information and free media are affected in conflict zones and how to safeguard OSCE values to give input for the upcoming German OSCE presidency in 2016.

On **31 August** I participated in the annual Austrian Ambassadors Conference in **Vienna** organized by the Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and spoke about media freedom issues.

On **2-4 September** I attended the 16th international anti-corruption conference focusing on the issue of ending impunity for crimes committed against journalists in **Putrajaya**,

Malaysia, and participated on a panel “Don’t let them get away with it: Investigating and exposing the truth” organized by Transparency International.

On **3-4 September** my Office participated in the conference “Working with Youth for Youth: Protection against Radicalization” in **Belgrade** organized by the Chairmanship together with the Special Representatives on Youth and Security and spoke on the panel on “Countering radicalization and protecting human rights as mutually reinforcing goals.”

On **8 September** my Office participated in the South Caucasus Regional Meeting of Heads of OSCE Field Operations in **Vienna**.

On **14 September** my Office participated in an expert meeting on International Declarations and Self-Regulatory Guidelines on Journalists Safety “Strengthening Journalists’ Safety: A Global Concern,” in **London** organized by the International Press Institute, the International News Safety Institute and the Al Jazeera Media Network.

On **15 September** my Office participated in a round-table discussion in **Yerevan** on the protection of confidentiality of sources and its implications for free media organized by the Armenian Prosecutor General’s Office.

On **15 September** I participated a meeting and a debate “Safety of journalists: Closing the implementation gap” on best practices to end impunity for attacks against journalists in **Geneva**, organized by Article 19.

On **16 September** my Office delivered a lecture by video link on the limitations of propaganda for war and hatred in international law to the students of the Annenberg School of Communications of the University of Pennsylvania.

On **17-18 September** my Office participated in an expert meeting on protection of journalism and the safety of journalists and other media, arranged by Council of Europe in **Strasbourg**.

On **21-22 September** I attended the 2015 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in **Warsaw**. Working session 1 focused on the current situation of media freedom and freedom of expression in the OSCE region. I emphasized that violence against those holding a different opinion is unacceptable and called upon governments to publicly refute crimes against journalists and help stop the spread of propaganda. My Office and I also attended side events focusing on freedom of expression and media freedom.

On **24 September** my Office moderated a discussion on "censorship, surveillance, ownership concentration, armed conflict, and media freedom: realities around the world" at the Kuratorium für Journalistenausbildung in **Salzburg**.

On **24-25 September** I participated in an international conference in **Florence** on the needs and challenges of transnational due process and freedom of expression organized by the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Training Institute.

On **28 September** my Office gave an overview of the media freedom situation in Europe to a group of Turkish judges and prosecutors in **Vienna** organized by the Council of Europe.

On **1 October** my Office participated in a conference “Informational Policies in Times of Crisis: Finding the Balance between National Security, Human Rights and Democratic Freedoms” in **Kyiv** organized by the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine.

On **2 October** my Office delivered a speech and participated at the first Forum for Internet Governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina in **Sarajevo**, organized by the nongovernmental organization One World Platform and the Communications Regulatory Agency.

On **7 October** I delivered opening remarks and participated in a two-day international workshop that my Office organized together with the Transnational Threats Department in **Bucharest** on “Media Responsibilities in the Context of Counter-Terrorism Policies.” The workshop discussed the relationship between media and counter-terrorism policies and ways to improve co-operation between governments, civil society and media organizations.

On **8-9 October** I participated in a multi-stakeholder meeting addressing tensions between the cross-border nature of the Internet and geographically defined national jurisdictions in **Berlin** organized by the Internet & Jurisdiction Project.

On **13-14 October** I participated in an international conference on freedom of expression “Freedom of expression: Still a precondition for democracy?” in **Strasbourg** organized by the Council of Europe.

On **15-16 October** my Office participated in an international expert group meeting on due diligence and accountability for online violence against women in **Florence** organized by the Association for Progressive Communications, the Due Diligence Project and the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Training Institute.

On **16-18 October** I delivered an opening address and participated in a conference “Gaining a digital edge: Freedom of expression” in **Belgrade** organized by OSCE Mission to Serbia, SHARE Foundation, Central European University and my Office. The conference dealt with how to navigate the legal, regulatory, and technological challenges of the new digital media environment.

On **19 October** and on **25 November** I opened two seminars in **Vienna**, organized and hosted by the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the OSCE, for 80 Turkish judges and prosecutors. The seminars, conducted by members of my Office, focused on freedom of expression and media freedom in the OSCE area, including in Turkey, and on OSCE commitments and international standards on free expression and free media.

On **19-20 October** my Office organized a two-day workshop in **Vienna** for young journalists from Ukraine and Russia to discuss journalism ethics and freedom of the press as part of the project, organized with Reporters without Borders in Austria, “Dialogue on Journalism.”

On **22-23 October** I spoke at a side event of the UN General Assembly in **New York** on the protection of journalists’ sources and whistleblowers organized by Article 19. I also met with Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression David Kaye and the Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights, Ivan Šimonović, and a number of permanent representatives from OSCE participating States.

On **28-30 October** I participated in the 42nd annual meeting of the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities in **Nuremberg**.

On **3 November** my Office participated in the discussions of the Political Working Group in **Minsk** for the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

On **4 November** my Office participated at the third Speak-up! conference in **Brussels** on “Freedom of expression and media in the Western Balkans and Turkey” organized by the European Commission. The event brought together journalists, media experts, decision-makers from enlargement countries, as well as authorities and experts from international, regional and national organizations committed to promoting freedom of expression to discuss media literacy, professional and ethical standards in mainstream media among other topics.

On **4 November** I participated in the conference “The 25 years of the Charter of Paris” in **Warsaw** organized by the Polish Institute for International Affairs and the German Federal Academy for Security Policy and spoke on a panel “The Human Dimension of the OSCE – Current State and Outlook.”

On **5 November** my Office participated in a conference “International standards for the protection of freedom of expression” in **Rome** organized by the University of Rome.

On **10-13 November** the Director of my Office participated in the 10th annual Internet Governance Forum meeting on “Evolution of Internet governance: Empowering sustainable development” in **João Pessoa, Brazil**, and took part in the discussion “Human Rights and the Internet” and a workshop on “Countering the Online Abuse of and Violence Against Women and Girls” to talk about the Office’s work on online safety of female journalists. During the forum he held meetings with the presidents of ICANN and the Internet Society, the UN Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, the OAS Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression and several representatives from government, business and nongovernmental organizations.

On **17-18 November** my Office participated in the regional conference South East Europe – Working together toward EU accession in **Sarajevo** organized by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit.

On **18 November** I spoke at the opening of the 10th International Media Forum “Dialogue of Cultures” at the Hermitage Museum in **St. Petersburg, Russia**, organized by “MediaCongress – journalistic community of Europe and Asia.”

On **18-19 November** my Office participated in a conference in **Bogota, Columbia**, on “Free and Independent Media in plural and diverse media systems” and spoke on a panel “Media freedom standards and audiovisual regulation.”

On **21 November** my Office participated in the conference Transeurope: Civil society networks focusing on contributions of civil society networks in overcoming the complex challenges Europe is facing in Rovereto, Italy, organized by Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso.

On **25 November** my Office hosted a meeting in Vienna of the Montenegrin Working Group on self-regulation to finalize and adopt the newly amended Journalists' Code of Ethics and to discuss future co-operation.

Training

Workshop for young Russian and Ukrainian journalists

On **19-20 October** my Office co-organized with Reporters without Borders in Austria a workshop for young Russian and Ukrainian journalists titled “Dialogue on journalism.” 14 young journalists from both countries learned about and discussed such topics as ethics in journalism, conflict reporting, the risks of propaganda journalism, freedom of the media as a human right and the safety of journalists. Participants also discussed ideas for joint multimedia products.

The trainers were Alexander Warzilek, Executive manager of the Austrian Press Council, Herwig Höller, journalist specialized on East and Southeast Europe and Correspondent of the Austria Press Agency, and Hannes Tretter, Director of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights. The event was organized in close collaboration with the Independent Media Trade Union of Ukraine, the National Union of the Journalists of Ukraine, and the Russian Union of Journalists.

Seminar for judges and prosecutors

On **19 October** and on **25 November** I opened two seminars in Vienna, organized and hosted by the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the OSCE for 80 Turkish judges and prosecutors. The seminars, conducted by members of my Office, focused on freedom of expression and media freedom in the OSCE area, including Turkey, and on OSCE commitments and international standards on free expression and free media.

Study trip to Press Council for Montenegrin journalists

On **29 September-1 October** my Office organized a study visit of the Montenegrin Working Group on self-regulation to the Press Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo. This was part of a long-term project of my Office to strengthen media self-regulation in Montenegro. The workshop was moderated by Liljana Zurovac, Director of the BiH Press Council. Members of the working group also met with the BiH Press Council's Complaints Commission to learn about the decision-making process on breaches of media ethics.

Conferences

Round-table discussions between Ukrainian and Russian media trade unions

On **20 July** my Office organized round-table discussions in Vienna among 10 senior representatives of the Russian Union of Journalists, the Independent Media Trade Union of Ukraine and the National Union of the Journalists of Ukraine. Participants discussed ways to improve journalists' professional standards and safety in Ukraine. Topics also included the conclusions of my Office's conference “Journalists' Safety, Media Freedom and Pluralism in Times of Conflict” held in June in Vienna and a project of common activities between journalists of the two countries.

Representatives of the International Federation of Journalists, the International Press Institute and Reporters without Borders also participated in the meeting.

As a result of the roundtable, representatives of the Russian and Ukrainian media trade unions endorsed the key recommendations that followed the conference “Journalists’ Safety, Media Freedom and Pluralism in Times of Conflict” held in Vienna on 15 and 16 June 2015. The document is available at <http://www.osce.org/fom/173651>.

New Challenges to Freedom of Expression: Countering Online Abuse of Female Journalists

Female journalists, bloggers and other media actors are disproportionately experiencing gender-related threats, harassment and intimidation on the Internet which has a direct impact on their safety and future online activities. The expert meeting “New Challenges to Freedom of Expression: Countering Online Abuse of Female Journalists” was held on **17 September** in an effort to elaborate on what actions should be taken to respond to these threats.

Some 80 journalists, media experts and government and civil society representatives from OSCE participating States gathered in Vienna to discuss the current situation and to bring together best practices, strategies and possible solutions.

Attending nongovernmental organizations included Index on Censorship, International Women’s Media Foundation, International News Safety Institute, European Federation of Journalists, Committee to Protect Journalists, International Press Institute, One World Platform, Reporters Without Borders, Dart Centre Europe, Ethical Journalism Network, Institute of Mass Information (Ukraine), Article 19, Russian Union of Journalists, Croatian Journalists Association, Lithuanian Online Media Association and Charter 97.org.

The debates resulted in three sets of recommendations issued by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media on 21 October. They include following:

- **Recommendations to participating States** to recognize online abuse of female journalists as a direct attack on media freedom and to take concrete measures, such as strengthening capacities of law enforcement agencies to better protect individuals by applying existing laws in line with international human rights standards instead of introducing new criminal laws that could stifle freedom of expression, and supporting the compilation and analysis of data related to online abuse and its effects.
- **Recommendations to media organizations** to work together to create a company culture of gender equality, adopt industry-wide guidelines on identifying and monitoring online abuse, ensure access to a system of support, and put in place clear and transparent procedures related to content moderation, with the view of protecting the right to freedom of expression.
- **Recommendations to intermediaries and social media platforms** to ensure a safe space for all users by introducing proportionate and adequate, clear understandable and accessible service and community guidelines, and to engage in capacity building with civil society organizations on issues like counter-speech as a response to abusive content.

The full list of recommendations is available at <http://www.osce.org/fom/193556>.

My Office has commissioned a publication which will highlight the different aspects of online abuse of female journalists that were discussed at the expert meeting and elaborate on the recommendations issued as an outcome of the debates.

South Caucasus Media Conference

On **29-30 September** my Office held the 12th South Caucasus Media Conference in Tbilisi for more than 60 participants representing media, government, civil society and academia from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The main topic of the conference was digitalization for freedom of the media. Additionally, participants discussed the latest media freedom developments in the region. Four international experts from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, Germany and Slovenia spoke about the role of regulatory authorities and pluralism in a digital environment.

Participants adopted recommendations on the role of regulatory authorities in a digital environment and how to improve pluralism and media freedom in the context of the digital switchover.

It is available in Armenian, English and Russian at: <http://www.osce.org/fom/190791>.

Central Asia Media Conference

On **19-20 November** my Office held the 17th Central Asia Media Conference in Dushanbe for more than 70 participants representing media, government, civil society and academia from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, along with experts from Mongolia. The main topic of the conference was digitalization for freedom of the media. Additionally, participants discussed the latest media freedom developments in the region. Two international experts from Denmark and Germany were invited to talk about media pluralism in a digital environment.

Participants adopted a list of recommendations on how to improve pluralism and media freedom in a digital environment. It is available in English and Russian at: <http://www.osce.org/fom/202816>.

Planned activities for the next reporting period

On **27 November** my Office will organize the 8th round-table discussion between Ukrainian and Russian media trade unions in **Vienna**.

On **9 December** my Office will hold the third meeting of the series of conferences on Open Journalism on the topic of the role of Internet intermediaries in freedom of expression at the Hofburg in **Vienna**.

In **December** my Office will organize a study visit for a group of seven representatives of the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine to **Sarajevo** to visit the Communications Regulatory Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The purpose of the visit is to give an opportunity to the Council members and professionals to learn about media regulations practice in times of conflict and post-conflict environment.

Training for the Media Council of Mongolia

In **December** my Office will support a 3-day workshop on awareness raising for members of the Media Council of Mongolia in **Ulaanbaatar** with participation of a trainer from the Press Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Visits and participation in events

On **30 November** I will give a speech at the book launch for “Free Speech and Censorship around the Globe” at Central European University in **Budapest**.

On **3-4 December** I will attend the Ministerial Council in **Belgrade**.

On **4 December** my Office will participate in an expert meeting on freedom of expression and defamation in **London** organized by Article 19.

On **10 December** my Office will participate in the conference “Human rights of the Internet users” in **Sofia** organized by the Applied Research and Communications Fund and the Council of Europe.

On **11 December** my Office will participate in a workshop in **Strasbourg** on media regulation and data protection organized by the European Audiovisual Observatory and the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities.

Extra-budgetary donors

I would like to thank the participating States of the Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Serbia, Sweden and Switzerland for their contributions which made possible the expert meetings, conferences and training during this reporting period.

I encourage all participating States to consider supporting my Office’s effort to provide classes and regional meetings to improve the media landscape.