



**Permanent Mission of Ukraine**  
to the International  
Organizations in Vienna

## **Statement on “World Press Freedom Day”**

As delivered by Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk,  
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,  
to the 1226<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
2 May 2019

**Mr. Chairperson,**

On the occasion of “World Press Freedom Day” which we will mark tomorrow on 3 May 2019 the Delegation of Ukraine wishes to underline the critical importance of free media for the development of a democratic, pluralistic and prosperous society.

Ukraine joins other OSCE participating States in reaffirming the pledge to promote and protect freedom of expression and media freedom in the OSCE area in line with our agreed principles and commitments.

We strongly and unequivocally condemn all attacks against journalists and maintain a firm view that journalists’ safety must be guaranteed at all times. Having taken important legislative measures to strengthen the safety of journalists and increase responsibility for obstruction of their work, the Ukrainian authorities give utmost attention to the thorough and impartial investigation of all cases of violence and intimidation of members of the media. Unfortunately, a number of cases remain unresolved.

On a number of occasions we updated the OSCE Permanent Council about specific and important steps undertaken in the area of strengthening the environment for free media. Ukraine closely co-operates with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media receiving valuable expertise and assistance in enhancing the implementation of relevant commitments. We will continue to do so in the efforts to enhance media freedom and protection of journalists in the country.

Ukraine’s resolve to improve the environment for free media is articulated in the fact that since the Revolution of Dignity in 2014 Ukraine’s score in the World Press Freedom Index run by the respected international NGO “Reporters without Borders” has improved by 25 points.

At the same time there are parts of Ukraine’s territory where press freedom is under severe attack by the occupation administration of the Russian Federation, which systematically perpetrates violation of the right to freedom of expression.

Those parts are the temporarily occupied Crimea and certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Physical abduction, violence and legal harassment directed at journalists by the Russian occupation authorities have made these areas “no-go zones” for independent, critical and investigative journalism.

We call upon the international community, including the RFoM, to constantly monitor the media situation in these parts of Ukraine, illegally occupied by the Russian Federation, and to react systematically to glaring violations and repressive policies perpetrated by the Russian occupation authorities.

**Mr. Chairperson**

As a country suffering from Russia’s aggression, Ukraine is alarmed over the climate of impunity for attacks on journalists in the Russian Federation, which eradicates pluralism, stifles professional reporting and leads to self-censorship. We repeatedly pointed out to a clear link between Russia’s external aggression and domestic clamp-down on human rights and fundamental freedoms. A real threat to press freedom is the campaign of disinformation carried out on industrial scale by Russia’s state-owned media.

Russian Federation remains one of the most dangerous places for journalists in the OSCE region with the highest number of journalists brutally attacked and killed in the past 25 years. A report on journalist killings in the OSCE region since 1992, issued by the Office of the RFoM in 2017, testifies that among 400 journalists from the whole OSCE region, who paid the ultimate price in the course of their work, over 170 journalists are from Russia. The vast majority of the cases have not been investigated and the perpetrators have not been brought to justice.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

Marking “World Press Freedom Day” the fundamentals of press freedom, we should remember those who remain in illegal detention for being defenders of the freedom of speech. Among those defenders are Ukrainian citizens Roman Sushchenko, Oleg Sentsov and Stanislav Asieyev, who have been taken hostages by the Russian authorities for being Ukrainian journalists and media workers, exposing Russia’s illegal actions against Ukraine. To date numerous calls by the international community on Russia to release the Ukrainian media representatives remain ignored by the Russian authorities. Today we reiterate our demand to Russia to immediately and unconditionally set free Roman Sushchenko, Oleg Sentsov, Stanislav Asieyev and other Ukrainian political prisoners.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.**