



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 910 Vienna, 3 May 2012

EU statement on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day

The European Union would like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the Declaration by the High Representative, Catherine Ashton, on behalf of the European Union on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, issued 3 May 2012 in Brussels:

“Freedom of expression as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human rights entails everyone’s right to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. On the occasion of World Press Freedom day, the European Union recalls these principles and pays tribute to all those who fight for the respect of freedom of expression and for free, pluralistic press and other media.

Censorship and harassment of editors, writers, journalists or bloggers are unacceptable, as are the use of violence and state induced arrests inflicted upon them. The EU commends the courageous work of journalists who, in often highly precarious conditions, continue to provide independent information. It calls on all states to guarantee the safety of journalists and to allow them to carry out their vital role of reporting and commenting on events in an independent manner without fear of violence and recrimination.

Freedom of expression also extends to the internet and other media, and the EU is firmly opposed to any unjustified, disproportional restrictions of access to or use of these media.”

Mr Chairperson, we look forward to the opportunity to elaborate on our views concerning freedom on the Internet during the upcoming conference in Dublin. We would like to remind all participating States of our firm determination to continue to promote freedom of expression and pluralism in digital media as well as the issue of safety of journalists in the OSCE, including on a Ministerial Council level. We call on States, media and non-governmental organisations everywhere to also join forces with the United Nations to promote online and offline freedom of expression in accordance with internationally accepted principles. This is a pillar of human rights, a foundation for democratic societies and a force for their transformation.

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our strong appreciation for the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM), Ms Dunja Mijatović, and her team for their invaluable work in assisting us, the participating States, in meeting our commitments in the field of freedom of the media. We encourage the Representative to use all tools at her disposal to draw attention to breaches of media freedom commitments and we reiterate our wish to see an increase in the budgetary resources allocated to her office in the coming years. We call on all participating States to cooperate with Ms Mijatović and her Office and make use of their assistance and expertise.

The Acceding Country Croatia*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland+ and Serbia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.