

Statement on behalf of Sweden
As delivered by Ambassador Fredrik Löjdquist at the closing session of
“Internet 2013 – Shaping policies to advance media freedom”

Dear Mr. Chairman,

I align myself fully with the statement by the European Union as well as the statement made by the Netherlands on behalf of the Freedom Online Coalition - and I'd like to make some additional comments in national capacity.

Let me start by joining previous speakers in expressing my sincere gratitude to the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms Dunja Mijatović and her team for organizing this timely event.

Over the past couple of days, we've been able to touch upon some of the aspects that the rapid advancement of technology has brought, in terms of freedom of expression and its corollary media freedom. Throughout various sessions, the need for protecting human rights within new technologies, by means of applying our common OSCE commitments and existing international human rights law online as well as offline, has been highlighted. As we've seen, the Internet is not only a catalyst for innovation but a vital component in safeguarding our democratic values and the new frontline for the work for freedom in the world.

Internet freedom is a cornerstone in Swedish foreign policy. It is with deep concern therefore, that we observe how some participating States continue to impose, or even strengthen, restrictions on the use of new technologies in order to control, monitor or even harass individuals who express their opinions through new media. Such curbing of fundamental freedoms, whether it be online or offline, is inconsistent with international human rights law as well as our common media freedom commitments.

Let me reiterate in this context, that the exercise of freedom of expression and media freedom online does not imply that limitations to these freedoms may never be imposed. On the contrary, restrictions to fundamental freedoms online may indeed apply, for example with regard to hate speech or incitement to violence. Such restrictions must nevertheless be considered the exception, and when allowed, they must strictly follow the requirements set out in established international human rights law.

Thus, as concluded during our sessions, for instance on hateful speech, the good news is that we do not need any new rules, regulations or standards – as the international human rights commitments that are already in place are sufficient in this regard. Rather, the application of human rights online as well as offline is a prerequisite for creating the best possible conditions for an open and free Internet through which individuals, media outlets, governments, journalists, NGOs and others may communicate, impart and receive information freely.

Furthermore, throughout various discussions these days, we've seen that the pressing need is not to strike a balance between security on the one hand, and internet freedom on the other. Rather, discussions on cyber security should not be held in isolation, as

freedom and security are mutually reinforcing rather than conflicting. After all, the purpose of security is to protect open and free societies and our fundamental rights. Hence, cyber security must never limit the same human rights that it in fact exists to protect. Allow me to welcome, in this context, the establishment of the OSCE cross-dimensional working group on cyber security – enabling for a comprehensive security-related dialogue for the development of CBMs. Taking full use of all three of the OSCEs dimensions is necessary to tackle this issue that truly is cross cutting and horizontal. To further strengthen the dialogue on internet freedom and its relation to security and development, Sweden has established the Stockholm Internet Forum in Internet Freedom for Global Development. The next forum will take place in May 2013.

To conclude – development, human rights and security are closely correlated themes, and intimately linked to internet freedom. As an example, let me refer to the adoption by consensus of the resolution in the Human Rights Council in July, affirming the importance of the internet to global development and the application of human rights online as well as offline. This is a landmark decision - demonstrating that maintaining free flow of information on the Internet is a global call and not something which is pushed by a few members of the United Nations.

We deeply regret, therefore, that the OSCE was unable to join in reaffirming the applicability of human rights online at the 2012 Dublin Ministerial Council. To this end, I'd like to take the opportunity to reiterate Sweden's support for the draft Declaration on Fundamental Freedoms in the Digital Age.

In our future endeavours, let us join in reaffirming - and strengthening - these globally agreed standards within the OSCE context.

Thank you for your attention.