Vienna, 14.02.2013

OSCE-RFoM conference

"Internet 2013 – Shaping policies to advance media freedom"

Vienna, 14 and 15 February 2013

Statement by Ambassador Rüdiger Lüdeking at the Closing Plenary Session of the conference:

"Germany fully subscribes to the statement made on behalf of the European Union. From our national perspective I would like to add the following:

Because of its global character the internet changes international co-operation fundamentally. The internet offers unique chances to foster freedom and democratic values. Media freedom, which was at the focus of this conference, is especially important in this context.

Moreover, the internet is a significant pillar and driver of global wealth. To fully benefit from the advantages of the web, however, an intensive international exchange is needed to address its challenges as well. No single country can manage the ever intensifying inter-linkage of massive data streams. Likewise, no country alone can ensure the availability and integrity of our information technology. And only jointly we can make sure that authoritarian regimes won't abuse the internet as a tool for repression. Therefore we need to engage in an international dialogue on questions of "Internet Governance" to which this conference initiated by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media has made an important contribution.

This dialogue should not only focus on technical and legal questions, but should also put emphasis on the values that guide us.

From Germany's perspective there are three basic principles which guide our German policies in the fields of Internet Governance and Cyber Foreign Policy:

Freedom is our highest priority in internet matters. Respect for the freedoms of expression and of speech, the right for free access to information as well as for the freedom of the individual and the media must be guaranteed. We must, however, always bear in mind that the protection of Human and Citizens' Rights is a task which constantly requests our renewed attention.

Secondly, Freedom comes along with responsibility. Self-regulation is an important principle of internet governance: Individuals, companies and governments must act responsibly when they make use of the freedoms of the internet. Regulation should be applied where democratic values or the rule of law are endangered. We need to strengthen cooperation on the protection of intellectual property and on combating crime while harnessing the creative potential power of the internet

A free, open and secure internet is an indispensable prerequisite for information and communication technology, the use of which is important for economic and social development. Germany gives high priority to the principle of transparency and sharing knowledge and information as the basis of any modern society. The internet provides us with new opportunities for global access to education, the exchange of opinions and experience and for economic development and success. It nourishes the growth of a global public community and contributes to better mutual understanding, especially at the level of civil societies.

Together with its partners in the European Union, Germany strives for the goal to further strengthen the principles of freedom, transparency and the protection of the rights of the individual online. In this context, we consider the OSCE to be an important forum which can set an example for the necessary global co-operation in this field."