



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

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Statement on the “World Press Freedom Day”

As delivered by Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1184th meeting of the Permanent Council,
3 May 2018

Mr. Chairman,

Today, on the occasion of the 25th celebration of the World Press Freedom Day, Ukraine joins other OSCE participating States in reaffirming our pledge to promote and protect freedom of expression and media freedom in the OSCE area in line with our commonly agreed principles and commitments.

Ukraine’s resolve to improve the environment for free media is best testified by the fact that, for a consecutive year, in the 2018 World Press Freedom Index, published by the respected international NGO “Reporters without Borders”, Ukraine again raised in the table. Since the Revolution of Dignity in 2014, Ukraine’s score improved by 26 points.

Ukraine strongly and unequivocally condemns all attacks against journalists and maintains 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.

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, and will continue to do so in the efforts to enhance media freedom and protection of journalists in the country.

Mr. Chairman,

Press freedom in Ukraine is being under attack by the Russian Federation, which systematically perpetrates violations of the right to freedom of expression in the temporarily occupied Crimea and certain parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Physical abduction, violence and legal harassment against journalists by the Russian occupation authorities have made these areas “no-go zones” for independent, critical and investigative journalism.

We continue to witness an information war waged by the Russian state-controlled media and aimed at destroying peace, security and stability in Ukraine. Anti-Ukrainian falsifications by the Russian media defy norms of journalistic ethics and human morality, deliberately incite inter-ethnic hatred.

Media freedom in the Russian Federation continues to be further eroding. The journalistic profession itself is under pressure of being discredited in Russia, as was confirmed in the latest report of the “Reporters without Borders” on Russia. I quote: “The very idea that a journalist can be independent is undermined when journalists on the dominating state-controlled TV channels purely act as producers of propaganda, while suspicion is systematically thrown at independent journalists for working as “foreign agents”, i.e. in the interest of foreign governments”.

The internet, which has been until recently the space for freedom of expression, has become reined by the Russian state.

The 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 15 years, where in most cases the perpetrators have not been brought to justice.

We call on the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to remain fully seized of the issues threatening freedom of the media and expression in Russia. Without these fundamental freedoms Russia will pose a constantly increasing threat to peace and stability in Europe.

Mr. Chairman,

As we celebrate the fundamentals of press freedom, we should remember those who remain in illegal detention for being defenders of the freedom of speech. One of those defenders is the Ukrainian citizen and journalist Roman Sushchenko, who has been taken hostage by the Russian authorities for being a Ukrainian journalist, exposing Russia’s illegal actions against Ukraine. Since 2016 he has been in illegal detention in Russia on the trumped-up charges of “espionage”, and his arrest has been recently extended until 16 September 2018.

Despite numerous calls by the international community on Russia to release the Ukrainian reporter Roman Sushchenko, they remain ignored by the Russian authorities. Today we reiterate our demand to Russia to immediately set him free.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.