



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE OSCE REPRESENTATIVE ON
FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA**

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 10 March 2016

Mr Chairman,

The Representative on Freedom of the Media has once again shown her keen understanding of how freedom of the media and freedom of expression are closely linked to other challenges confronting us. Freedom of opinion and expression is fundamental for the enjoyment of other human rights. Indeed, restrictions on freedom of opinion, expression and media are of great concern also because they are an indication of other restrictions on human rights and democracy.

Mr Chairman,

Protecting national security and countering terrorism are legitimate concerns for governments. Freedom of expression and free media do not undermine these goals. On the contrary, they are mutually reinforcing. Respect for human rights and the rule of law reinforces national security and deters recruitment to terrorism. Regrettably, we have seen examples of security laws being used to jail journalists, force them to reveal their sources or punish dissemination of certain information or opinions. This is not in accordance with OSCE commitments. Security concerns should never be used as a pretext for undermining human rights.

The need to promote and protect human rights while countering terrorism was the topic of the first joint meeting of the three committees last year. We need to discuss these issues further, with help from the Representative on Freedom of the Media, among others. We welcome the first step that was taken through the joint effort between the RFOM and the Anti-terrorism Unit in Bucharest last year.

Mr Chairman,

In January, Minister of Foreign Affairs Børge Brende launched Norway's strategy for promoting freedom of expression. The strategy was presented for representatives from civil society, academia and the media, with Representative Dunja Mijatovic and UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression David Kaye as guest speakers. Let me take this opportunity to thank the Representative for contributing to this event.

As part of Norway's foreign and development policy, the Government will focus on three cornerstones:

- strengthening our support for independent media
- providing protection for people who express their opinions publicly, and
- improving public access to information.

Mr. Chairman,

Protecting journalists who uncover corruption and abuse of power, or journalists who work in areas of conflict, is vital to safeguard democracy. For every journalist who is attacked or harassed, many others are silenced. That is why it is so important that attacks against journalists are investigated, prosecuted and punished.

We are deeply disturbed by the attack on a group of journalists and human rights activists in Ingushetia yesterday, an attack that has been referred to by other speakers before me. A Norwegian journalist was in the group. Those responsible must be held accountable. We will address this incident in more detail later in our meeting today.

Mr Chairman,

We were close to coming to a decision on appointing the new Representative. My delegation regrets that it was not possible to reach a decision. We are disappointed, but not surprised. The position of certain delegations fits into a pattern of trying to undermine our autonomous institutions.

Mr Chairman,

Through her principled and high quality work, Dunja Mijatović has raised the standing of, and the respect for, the institution of Representative on Freedom of the Media. She has fulfilled her function as watchdog in a fair and impartial way. She has made critical comments on issues in – I believe – all OSCE participating States. She has made countless visits to assist governments in drafting legislation, regulate media freedom or improve our understanding of the issues covered by her mandate.

Dunja, we thank you for your energy, your personal engagement and your impressive achievements.

Thank you, Mr Chairman