

Opening Remarks

ENGLISH only

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Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting

Promotion of Pluralism in New Media

7-8 July 2011

Hofburg, Vienna

It is my honour to speak in the presence of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Ms. Dunja Mijatovič and other distinguished organizers and participants on behalf of the Chairmanship-in-Office at the opening of this meeting on pluralism in new media. As many of you know, media freedom and freedom of expression are priority topics for the Lithuanian Chairmanship. I am pleased to note that the incoming Irish Chairmanship has also indicated that media freedom will continue to be a priority during their Chairmanship next year.

This sustained focus reflects the wide range of challenges confronting free media across the OSCE area. Early last month, the Chairmanship and the RFOM Office co-organized a two-day conference in Vilnius on the “Safety of Journalists in the OSCE Region.” That event, which brought together government officials, experts and media representatives from throughout the region, added substantially to our understanding of the threats and violence directed at journalists today. The resulting recommendations provide a very good basis for beginning to address this problem.

Today’s meeting is the next logical step in examining the state of free media in the OSCE region.

As you will see from the annotated agenda, a multitude of OSCE commitments address the issues we will discuss over the next two days. Among them are the 1991 Moscow Document, the 1994 Budapest Summit Document, the 1996 Lisbon Summit Declaration and the Charter for European Security, adopted at the 1999 Istanbul Summit.

In addition, I would like to draw your attention to Permanent Council Decision 633 of November 2004, which calls upon participating States to *“take action to ensure that the Internet remains an open and public forum for freedom of opinion and expression, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and to foster access to the Internet both in homes and in schools.”*

New media, brought into existence by previously unimaginable advances in technology, offer an unprecedented opportunity for people throughout the world to enjoy freedom of opinion and expression and to exercise their right to impart and receive information. It is critically important that these new platforms remain open to all. Media pluralism, which is the opportunity to have many voices heard, whether the platform is digital broadcasting, the Internet, mobile telephones or more traditional media, must become a reality.

During the rest of today and the whole day tomorrow we hope there will be an open and constructive discussion on how the Internet, among other media, can remain an open and public forum. We also hope to see this meeting conclude, as the conference in Vilnius did, with constructive recommendations that will help the participating States to make concrete progress on this issue at the Vilnius Ministerial Council.

Thank you.