

**Statement by the Permanent Mission of the Slovak Republic to the International Organisations in Vienna in response to the statement of the United States of America at the OSCE Permanent Council
13 June 2013**

Mr. Chairperson,

Dear Colleagues,

We thank the United States for drawing the attention of the OSCE Permanent Council to the issue of media defamation suits and judicial integrity in Slovakia. Also Slovakia pays high attention to this matter and takes due steps and decisions to protect it.

We share the view that media play indispensable role in the democratic society and that public officials need to endure a higher threshold of criticism by the public. There is however close linkage between the freedom of expression and protection of personal integrity. This has been confirmed inter alia by the relevant case-law of the European Court of Human Rights under Article 10 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. With regard to cases mentioned we are also of the opinion that the award of damages should be proportional to the injury to reputation suffered.

I would like to assure you that Slovakia as a State party to all relevant human rights treaties, i.e. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms fully respects mutual linkage of the freedom of expression, the protection of personal rights as well as independence of the judiciary.

With this having in mind I take this opportunity to inform you that the issue of the damage cap in the civil defamation cases is one of the topics discussed at relevant expert fora. Let me assure you that the expressed concerns and expectations regarding this issue will be conveyed to the relevant Slovak authorities.

I would also like to highlight that the Slovak Government is not a part of these disputes and therefore doesn't intend to interfere with these judicial processes. There is an intention of the Slovak Government to protect the high level of independence of judiciary.

Before I thank the US government for its offer to provide assistance in these issues and we are looking forward to our future cooperation in this regard, I have to inform you that Madam OSCE Representative on Freedom of Media Dunja Mijatović during the same UNESCO World Press Freedom Day and in her same speech described media pluralism in Slovakia as "much-cherished".

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.