

GERMANY

**Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting „Freedom of the Media: Protection of Journalists and Access to Information“, 13-14 July 2006 –
Working session 3: Protection of Journalists – Administrative Measures**

The need to protect journalists has one very visible side which is easily understood and acknowledged by the public: The protection of journalists against physical violence, accidental or deliberate killings on the battlefield or in other high-risk environments, against beatings, intimidations through threats of violence against the journalists themselves or their families, and other forms of physical pressure. Organisations like Reporters sans Frontières, the Committee to Protect Journalists and others are constantly collating the appalling figures of journalists who come to death or are physically harmed while going after their job. Sadly, 2005 saw the highest number in killings of journalists world-wide since 1995. In Iraq alone, more journalists were killed last year than in the entire Vietnam war. The daily „barometer“ that Reporters without frontiers has on its website on these occurrences is a stark testimony to the gravity of this phenomenon.

The need for protection of journalists against restrictive administrative measures, economic pressure etc. is less obvious and, by comparison, less acknowledged by the general public. This is probably so because these measures are more subtle, less conspicuous, camouflaged as a bureaucratic necessity or procedure or otherwise less visible to the public eye. However, these measures, when their intention is really to suppress certain media or individual journalists, are potentially no less detrimental to media freedom and no less „effective“ in this regard than physical pressure. We are happy, therefore, and thank the organizers of this meeting for dedicating one working session to this issue. We believe this issue needs even more attention today because it appears that there has been of late an increase, rather than a decrease, in the application of administrative measures as a means to limit media freedom in the OSCE area.

I would like to take this opportunity and ask our introducers and the Representative on the Freedom of the Media the following questions:

- Is there sufficient awareness among human rights defenders and the public at large of the threats to journalistic freedom and the repression of journalists through administrative measures?
- Are the regulatory systems in place in participating States commensurate with the need to protect journalists against restrictive administrative measures?
- What additional measures could be taken by States to improve these systems or their efficiency in practice?
- How can participating States make more efficient use of the assistance and advice offered by the Representative on the Freedom of the Media?
- How would the Representative qualify existing regulatory systems with regard to media in the context of the implementation of Human Dimension commitments as a whole?