

**OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION SESSION OF THE 2010 REVIEW CONFERENCE
Warsaw, 30 September – 8 October 2010**

STATEMENT OF THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

**Thursday, 7 October
Working Session 1**

Freedom of media

**Ms. Karine Soudjian
Head of Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues Desk
Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

Mr./Mme. Moderator,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Armenia is strongly committed to the promotion and protection of the freedom of expression - one of the major components of which is ensuring for free and independent functioning of the media. Armenia spares no effort to fulfill its commitments within Armenia's international obligations, taking also into account OSCE recommendations in this area. I would like to address some of the acute issues that were the focus of public discourse during the last year.

Armenia has entered the process of transition from analogue to digital broadcasting. It is not an easy and a non-controversial process as it touches upon multiple areas of our everyday life. The process was complicated in Armenia with the opposition in certain circles of media representatives to the legislative changes that were required to enable the transformation process to start. Armenia received the Opinion from the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media on the matter. Public discussions were initiated to accommodate concerns raised on the process and further clarify the procedures. Following conclusion of the discussions, respective changes were introduced into the Law "On Changes to the Law of the Republic of Armenia on Television and Radio" on 10 June 2010. According to Article 62 of the Law, the National Commission on Television and Radio announced 25 tenders for digital broadcasting licenses in the territory of Armenia, of which 6 are for republican broadcasting, 10 for regional and 9 for broadcasting in the capital city.

Given some persistent concerns, the President of Armenia suggested establishment of a working group under the Ombudsman's auspices, with the involvement of representatives from human rights organizations, media and political parties to finalize the discussions and introduce legal changes to the Law on Television and Radio Broadcasting, if necessary, which would allow for smoother transition from an analogue to a digital broadcasting system.

As for the independence of the National Commission on Television and Radio and Council on Public Television and Radio, legislative amendments were made in the respective laws in 2007 and 2009 which provided for the independence for formation and functioning of these bodies. The amendments carried out on 10 June 2010 furthered this process and introduced provisions ensuring for a more professional and independent composition of these bodies as, according to the new reading of the Law, parliamentarians, members of Government, members of the President's office and state civil servants cannot become members of the Commission. Efforts to increase gender representation in these regulatory bodies were also

carried out and a provision that at least one of the members of the Council should be a woman was introduced into the law.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform the OSCE participating states that on 15 June 2010 the President of Armenia signed into effect the amendments to the Criminal Code, making Armenia the 11th participating state to decriminalize defamation. We call on all OSCE participating states to intensify efforts to decriminalize defamation in the OSCE area.

Thank you.