



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
The Representative on Freedom of the Media
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Regular Report to the Permanent Council **for the period from 27 November 2014 through 17 June 2015**

Introduction

This Monday and Tuesday my Office hosted one of the largest conferences with more than 400 participants on the topic of “Journalists’ safety, media freedom and pluralism in times of conflict” which many of you attended.

We had an ambitious agenda which included sessions on journalists’ safety, ethics, broadcast regulation in times of conflict and the evil of propaganda for war.

As we approach the 40th anniversary of the founding of this organization, we should take note that ending the use of propaganda is enshrined in the basic principles of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975.

In it, the signatories “agreed to promote, by all means which each of them considers appropriate, a climate of confidence and respect among peoples consonant with their duty to refrain from propaganda for wars of aggression or for any threat or use of force inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations and with the Declaration on Principles Guiding Relations between Participating States, against another participating State.”

All of those topics, and more, were debated by the participants at our conference. In addition, the attendees had the opportunity to suggest what could (and should) be done to make it safer for journalists and media in conflict zones. We are putting those recommendations together now and they should be available in the near future.

Our conference was well timed. Just three weeks ago the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2222 on the protection of journalists put forward by Lithuania. The resolution condemns all violations and abuses committed against journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in situations of armed conflict.

The sessions at our Conference were well-attended and discussions were spirited.

But as we had our discussions Pavel Kanygin, a special correspondent for the Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta, was detained and in custody beaten and interrogated by the self-declared Donetsk People's Republic in eastern Ukraine then forced to leave the country. He was accused of drug crimes and held against his will before being released hours later and returned to Russia.

We speak grandiose thoughts here in Vienna, but the reality is that nothing changes in the field.

I ask you to look at the document in front of you, the latest report. It chronicles the work of my Office since last November – not that long a period of time. My current report details 45 attacks on media during the reporting period which resulted in death, personal injury or property damage.

I urge you to consider that number – 45 – and the scope and size of the job that this Office faces.

Physical violence is commonplace. Is it accepted?

Because we have allowed journalists to live in danger for so long, have we grown cold-hearted about what happens to them? Have we become so accepting of reporters being assaulted and shot at that it no longer has an effect on us? Have we grown fatigued of hearing about their troubles? Do we now just accept violence being “part of the job?”

That is the question we face because of the events of 7 January when a terrorist attack at the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris left 12 dead (of which 8 were staff) including cartoonists Cabu, Charb, Honoré, Tignous and Wolinski. And a following attack a month later in Copenhagen at a public event on art, freedom of speech and blasphemy left another person dead.

The initial response to the attack was one of fear, revulsion and solidarity, with more than two million people taking part in demonstrations worldwide to show support for the slain members of the media. But I have seen far too many commentaries since that time that say, in essence, “in one way or another, maybe those people had it coming to them.”

I tell you today that what happened on that day was an unforgivable crime that strikes right through the heart of free expression and free media.

These journalists were murdered because of the work they were doing. There is nothing that justifies the murder of journalists.

As I said in a Communiqué after the Charlie Hebdo incident, “In a democratic society we need to accept being shocked, disturbed or even offended. Violence and murder against those holding a different opinion is unacceptable.” This is not just my view, but is shared by many human rights institutions including the European Court of Human Rights.

Ironically, however, I am afraid that the threat of terrorism itself may lead to infringements on press freedom. As a response to terrorist activities, many participating States are hastily adopting laws that limit free expression, both expressly and in practice.

These laws allow for mass monitoring and collecting of electronic data from millions of citizens without due process or judicial oversight. These laws allow for the blocking and take down of web-based information – also without judicial oversight. These laws cast a wide net for criminals to swim into – but with such imprecise language defining what is terrorism and what is supporting terrorism, ordinary citizens could run afoul of these laws and that would make them criminals, too.

I do not suggest that we retreat and take a narrow view of free media gains and free expression triumphs. They are there – those venues where reporters can investigate serious issues and write their stories without fear of reprisal.

Nor do I suggest we at the OSCE simply focus on one topic. We need to remember the importance of the core activities of this Office, which includes working on broader issues across the spectrum. That includes, by the way, our initiative to combat violence against women journalists working online. It also includes our efforts to explore and bring to light what we call Open Journalism, to involve the participating States and provide them with an understanding of the future of journalism.

And, I must add, we must not forget that there are still OSCE regions that need more of our support and assistance when it comes to improving media freedom. From the establishment of this Office we have been able to bring together journalists and other professionals involved in media on an annual basis to address the important topics of the day. This year it is clear that due to the lack of funds we will not be able to bring together journalists from Central Asia, the South Caucasus and South East Europe in order to have very much needed discussions about media freedom problems they are facing.

In the end, it is my responsibility to inform the Permanent Council about serious violations of OSCE commitments on free expression and free speech.

I do so once again but with caution. The message may be getting muted simply based on the number of times I am saying the same thing – which is that violence against journalists is real, it's dangerous and it's growing. It has been for all the years this Office has been in existence.

Stop treating journalists, especially those holding different opinions, as enemies or, in situations of conflict, as soldiers. Do not sweep media freedom abuses under the carpet for the sake of other priorities. It is clear that these problems will just not go away or fix themselves, but will escalate and contribute to the deterioration of the overall situation if we do not step forward and protect our basic rights.

Issues raised with participating States

Albania

On **11-12 May** I visited Tirana to meet with authorities and civil society to discuss media freedom developments in the country. During my meetings I stressed the need to take advantage of the current momentum for public service broadcasting reform. I also addressed media pluralism and media concentration (especially during the digitalization process) the independence of the broadcast regulator, journalists' labour rights and Internet freedom.

I met with Foreign Minister Ditmir Bushati, Minister for Innovation and Public Administration Milena Harito, Chair and Deputy Chair of the Media Committee, Genc Pollo and Alfred Peza, Chair and Deputy Chair of the broadcast media regulator AMA, Gentian Sala and Sami Neza, Chair of the Board of public service broadcaster, RTSH Kristaq Traja and journalists and members of civil society.

Accepting an invitation from Foreign Minister Bushati, I also spoke at a media freedom conference on 11 May in Tirana commemorating 20 years of Albania's membership in the Council of Europe.

On **3 June** I wrote to Speaker of Parliament Ilir Meta in response to his request for assistance on an amendment to the law “On audiovisual media in the Republic of Albania.” The proposed amendment to repeal Article 62 of Law No. 97/2013 could, in the long term, negatively affect media plurality and, therefore, media freedom in Albania.

On **5 June** I issued a public statement condemning the latest attacks on journalists in the country. On 2 June Aurora Koromani, a journalist with the Gazeta Shqiptare newspaper, received a threat deemed serious. Police are now providing protection for Koromani. On 4 June a car belonging to Enver Doci, a television journalist with News 24 TV, was set on fire and destroyed in the town of Burrel in northern Albania. I welcomed the fact that the authorities quickly launched investigations into these incidents.

Armenia

On 24 December I received a response from the authorities regarding a 9 September attack on Marine Khachatryan, a journalist with A1+ television, while she was reporting on a public protest near Parliament. I was told that an investigation into the incident was resumed on 1 December. Subsequent news reports indicate the investigation has been discontinued and restarted several times since then. No one has been held responsible for the attack.

On **3 June** I wrote to the authorities to enquire about amendments to the Law on Television and Radio related to the digital switchover. I offered to commission an expert assessment and provide relevant policy recommendations in line with international standards and OSCE media freedom commitments.

Azerbaijan

On **5 December** I issued a public statement condemning the arrest of Khadija Ismailova, a journalist with Radio Azadliq. She was detained for two months on charges of inciting a person to commit suicide.

On **29 December** I issued a public statement denouncing a raid on Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (broadcasting as Radio Azadliq) and again called on the authorities to stop the intimidation of free media. On 26 December Radio Azadliq’s Baku bureau was raided by investigators from the state prosecutor's office. Documents, files and equipment were confiscated and the premises were sealed. Employees were called in for questioning. I said the authorities must allow Radio Azadliq to resume its work and safeguard the existence of critical voices in the country.

On 22 May I learned that Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty announced the closure of its Baku bureau.

On **27 January** I issued a public statement calling on the authorities to ensure the safety of Gunay Ismayilova, a media lawyer and deputy chair of the Institute for Reporters’ Freedom and Safety (IRFS), following a 26 January attack at her home. I said that media lawyers are

instrumental in protecting and safeguarding members of the media by providing legal support and monitoring infringement of free speech.

I again raised concerns about the rapidly deteriorating media freedom situation in general, including the raids on Radio Azadliq and the IRFS office in Baku. I reiterated my call for the release of all imprisoned journalists and free speech advocates, including Ismailova, Rasul Jafarov and many others.

On 28 January the Permanent Mission issued a press release in reaction to my statement commenting on my assessment of the media freedom environment in the country.

On 23 February I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Elmar Mammadyarov conveying my concern about media freedom in Azerbaijan, where several prominent journalists and free expression advocates continue to experience repression and are facing prosecution. I said I was particularly worried about Khadija Ismailova because on 13 February the authorities filed new charges accusing her of embezzlement, being involved in an illegal business and abuse of power. The court extended her pre-trial detention until 22 August based on the new charges.

In addition, while in custody she was found liable on controversial criminal libel charges and a fine had been imposed on her. I noted that Ismailova has serious health issues and requires continuing professional medical care.

I also noted the conviction of Seymur Hazi, one of the leading columnists for the opposition newspaper Azadliq and a presenter on the web-based program “Azerbaijan Saati,” who was sentenced on 29 January to five years in prison for hooliganism. The journalist had been threatened physically and assaulted several times in the past.

Further, I noted reports about Emin Huseynov, head of the Institute for Reporters’ Freedom and Safety, who was forced into hiding in the Swiss Embassy in Baku after law enforcement representatives raided the IRFS office and intimidated his family members in August 2014. Huseynov also faces similar tax evasion, illegal business operation and abuse of power charges.

I reiterated my call on the government to improve the situation and allow members of the media to work in an environment free from intimidation. I again offered to visit Baku, upon official invitation, to help address the issues and seek a joint solution.

On 24 March I received a response from the Permanent Mission commenting on my mandate and my assessment of the media freedom environment in the country. I was told that none of the matters raised in my letter represent an infringement on media freedom and are not linked to professional activities of people involved.

On 2 March on the 10th anniversary of the death of Azeri journalist Elmar Huseynov, I called on all OSCE participating States to ensure journalists’ safety and the right to freedom of expression. I said the attacks and harassment of journalists in the OSCE region are growing, while thorough investigations are scarce, resulting in a chilling effect on free media.

Huseynov, the founder and editor of the independent weekly news magazine Monitor, was killed outside his apartment in March 2005. Huseynov’s assailants remain at large.

On 25 March the Permanent Mission issued another press release in reaction to my statement commenting on my assessment of the media freedom environment in the country. Among other issues, the press release said that I had a selective and biased approach towards Azerbaijan.

On **9 April** I wrote to the authorities in response to their letter of 24 March, where I expressed my readiness to continue contributing and assisting Azerbaijan in complying with OSCE media freedom commitments. I said I have always advocated and promoted full compliance of all 57 participating States with OSCE principles and commitments regarding free expression and free media and that Azerbaijan was no exception.

I stressed the need to address the many issues, including the record numbers of journalists and free-expression advocates who are behind bars for doing their job and expressing their views.

I also addressed the concerns of the Permanent Mission as set forth in the press release of 25 March regarding the 10th anniversary of the killing of Elmar Huseynov. I said that while noting the progress of investigations, I always use such opportunities to remind participating States to continue their efforts until all perpetrators and masterminds of such crimes are brought to justice. I have issued similar statements about unsolved crimes against media on many occasions.

I once again offered my Office's assistance and my personal assistance, including a visit to Baku, and reiterated my request for a meeting with the Head of the Permanent Mission.

On **16 April** I issued a public statement condemning the sentencing of Rasul Jafarov, a free expression and free media advocate and human rights defender, to six and a half years in a penal colony. On 16 April the Baku Court on Grave Crimes found Jafarov guilty on charges of embezzlement, illegal entrepreneurship, tax evasion, abuse of power and forgery. Jafarov denies all allegations.

I said Jafarov's sentencing is an act of injustice and it adds to the growing number of journalists and free expression advocates serving time for their work. I also noted various reports indicating that both the investigation and the judicial process involving Jafarov were flawed. Reportedly, all prosecution witnesses during the court hearing testified on behalf of Jafarov.

I again reiterated the offer to assist Azerbaijan in much-needed improvements to media freedom, including through my visit.

On 6 May I learned that a court had extended the pre-trial confinement of Zerkalo journalist Rauf Mairkadyrov, who was arrested in April 2014 on charges of high treason. I raised his case on 22 April 2014. His detention was extended for four more months.

On 14 May I learned that the Court on Grave Crimes sentenced Murad Adilov, the brother of Natig Adilov, a journalist with Azadliq, to six years in prison on drug possession charges. I raised his case on 13 August 2014. Reportedly, Murad Adilov alleges that his case is linked to his brother's professional activities and critical reporting.

Belarus

On **2 December** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Makei and issued a public statement on **12 December** denouncing the practice of persecuting journalists that work for foreign media without state-approved accreditation, an issue I have repeatedly raised with the authorities, including during my last visit to Minsk on 15-16 September 2014. On 11 December a court in the town of Slonim fined Ales Zalevski, a journalist with Poland-based Belsat TV, for working without accreditation. On 2 December the court in Grodno fined freelance journalist Andrey Meleshko for working for Poland-based Radio Racya without accreditation. It was Meleshko's third administrative penalty on the same charges since June 2014. I noted that law enforcement brought similar charges against Tamara Shchepetkina, another freelance journalist. I called on the authorities to change such punitive practices.

I also expressed concerns about the measures taken by the authorities to take administrative action against several members of the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) in Grodno and Vitebsk on charges of violating the regulations on public gatherings. On 28 November and 1 December three freelance journalists and BAJ members, Elena Stepanova, Dmitriy Kazakevich and Constantine Mordvintsev, were among five people found guilty for taking a group photo against a background of an image of flying birds. This was a symbolic action to join the international campaign in support of journalists prosecuted for their professional activities. Each of the three journalists received administrative fines. Earlier on 25 November, Mikhail Karnevich and Vladimir Khilmanovich, both BAJ members, were fined for participation in a commemorative public event in Svisloch village of Grodno Oblast. Karnevich was charged despite the fact that he was on official assignment covering the event for the Belarus Service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

On 12 January I received a reply from the authorities on the cases raised in my interventions indicating that all journalists were prosecuted and subjected to an administrative fine by the court for having no accreditation or violating the law on public events.

On **8 December** I shared my concern in a letter to Minister Makei regarding the detention of Alexander Alesin, a journalist with the weekly newspaper *Belorusy i Rynok* and contributor to various media outlets. According to reports, on 25 November Alesin was detained by the State Security Committee. However, no official charges have been made.

Reportedly, Alesin was released on 10 December, but he is under investigation on charges of establishing a connection with the secret services of a foreign state.

On **18 December** I wrote to the authorities and issued a public statement on **22 December** expressing concern about amendments to the law "On Mass Media" which tighten government control of the Internet and pose a threat to free speech and free media. I said these amendments are based on vaguely formulated words and concepts and give the state the vast right to interfere with any information posted on the Internet. They also impose quasi-censorship functions on disseminators of information.

Amendments include the following elements:

- Owners of online resources are responsible for all illegal content posted, including material considered to be extremist information or "other information that is capable to make harm to the national interests of the Republic of Belarus";

- The Ministry of Information has the right to compile lists of “disseminators of information materials,” allowing the Ministry to suspend the activities of those who make available banned “information reports and/or materials”;
- The Ministry can block access to online resources without court authorization if two warnings had been issued within 12 months, and the spectrum for reasons to issue warnings has been expanded;
- The broadcast of foreign television programmes without prior registration shall be banned;
- Online reports disputed by any person must be removed the next day and the refutation must be posted in its place;
- Foreign ownership of more than 20 percent of the stock or other participation of such kind for any news outlet in Belarus, including online media, is prohibited.

The amendments were signed by the president on 20 December. They went into effect on 1 January.

I also pointed to intermittent blockings of independent online news platforms, including Charter97.org, Naviny.by, Belaruspartisan.org, as well as the website of the BelaPAN information agency since 19 December.

In a reply dated 2 March the authorities informed me that the amendments were prompted by the rapid development of new information and communication technologies and the globalization of information space. They are not intended to hinder the development of electronic media and freedom of speech, but to ensure meaningful legislative regulation of the Internet with a view to effectively address various threats and challenges in cyberspace.

On **21 January** I wrote to the authorities expressing concern about amendments to legislation to protect children from information harmful to their health and development, which were the subject of a legal analysis dated **17 February**. While having some positive provisions, the amendments contain vaguely defined terms which might seriously hinder the right of free expression and free media. I expressed hope that the proposed changes will be carefully reviewed by the members of Parliament so that the law balances the concerns of authorities with the right to free media.

(See Legal reviews)

On **4 March** I again wrote to the authorities regarding the government’s tightening control of Internet. On 19 February the Analytical Centre under the President and the Communications and Information Ministry introduced a directive which defines procedures for blocking access to websites allegedly containing illegal information, in accordance with the national legislation.

The directive also gives the ministry the power to unilaterally ban access to software enabling anonymous communication, in case the software is used to bypass bans and still reach blocked websites. I expressed concern that this provision of the directive, along with other broadly interpreted regulations which lack legal predictability and careful judicial scrutiny, would curtail the right of citizens to online anonymity and endanger free expression and free media on the Internet.

On **3 April** I issued a public statement reiterating my call on the authorities to stop persecuting members of the media following repeated harassment of journalists for doing their jobs and to find a constructive solution to the issue. I noted six additional cases involving freelance journalists who were fined for working with foreign media without accreditation:

- Konstantin Zhukovskiy, fined on 2 April by a court in Gomel;
- Inna Khomich, fined on 1 April by a court in Brest;
- Ales Levchuk, fined on 26 March and 24 December 2014 by courts in Brest;
- Larissa Shiryakova, fined on 12 March by a court in Gomel;
- Tamara Shchepetkina, fined on 6 March and 17 December 2014 by courts in Brest;
- Alina Litvinchuk, on 16 February and 12 January by a court in Brest.

I again offered my Office's assistance to end this problem, as well as facilitate a dialogue and increase the possibility of joint activities of government institutions and media organizations on the topic.

I also noted the increased number of warnings issued by the Information Ministry to media outlets in recent months, in some cases related to petty offenses such as wrongly spelling the name of the Ministry, using abbreviations to indicate the Republic of Belarus or posting publication data on a wrong page.

Official Belarussian sources state that the Information Ministry has issued 27 warnings to a total of 26 media outlets from January to March 2015. According to the latest amendments to the law "On Mass Media," media outlets that receive two or more warnings may lose their right to distribute information.

In addition, I noted reports that a number of independent online news platforms, including Charter97.org and Belaruspartisan.org, again have been intermittently blocked since the end of March.

I do hope that my calls to the authorities on accreditation will be addressed.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

On **29 December** I issued a public statement urging the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to stop persecuting journalists and to respect their right to protect sources, following a raid by the police on the offices of the news portal Klix.ba in Sarajevo and subsequent detention of key staff. Reportedly, the police seized computers, documents, notes and other items from the offices. Almost the entire staff of Klix.ba was asked to leave the premises while editor Jasmin Hadžiahmetović, directors Dario Šimić and Mario Šimić and journalist Edita Gorjanac were detained for questioning. They were later released.

On **20 January** I issued a public statement following my meeting with the management of Klix.ba to discuss the recent police raid on their offices and attempts by law enforcement officials to identify journalists' sources.

On **21 January** I wrote to the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina to express my concern about increasing threats and violence against journalists and that they need to be addressed at the highest political level. In the last 12 months there have been several attacks on media,

including Sinan Alić, Branislav Pavičić, Sanela Kajmović-Sojarić, Nihad Karić, Slavo Kukić, Štefica Galic and Amer Bahtijar; and death threats against Siniša Vukelić, Emir Hrnčić and Omer Hasanović. It is of particular concern that these crimes have not been publicly condemned by the authorities and their perpetrators remain unpunished. This sends a dangerous message to society. I urged the authorities to put an end to impunity and affirm that such crimes are not tolerated.

On **27 January** I wrote to Nedeljko Čubrilović, Speaker of the National Assembly of Republika Srpska, and issued a public statement warning that the draft Law on Public Peace and Order set for adoption in the next session could be used to limit free expression on social media. The draft law extends the definition of public place to the social media. If the law is adopted, under articles 7 and 8 it will become an offense to disturb the public order, to display symbols, images, drawings or texts containing indecent, offensive or disturbing content, to insult or engage in rude or insolent behaviour through social media. I offered to commission a legal analysis to ensure the law would be in line with the OSCE commitments and international standards on free expression.

On **5 February** I issued a public statement criticizing the new law, which was adopted by the National Assembly, despite my earlier warnings.

On **3 April** I wrote to the Chairman of the Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina and on **7 April** I issued a public statement to call on the new government of Bosnia and Herzegovina to deal with pressing issues that could further undermine the fragile media freedom situation in the country, including the sustainability of public broadcasting and implementation of the digital switchover. I urged the authorities to ensure that an efficient funding system is put in place which would also guarantee the financial and editorial independence of public broadcasters before the system collapses.

On **29 April** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Igor Crnadak to raise concern and request further information on the latest incident regarding journalists' safety, in which Sanela Prašović Gadžo, a prominent journalist on BHTV, received death threats on Facebook following a broadcast of her show, Interview 20.

On **1 June** I received an invitation to make an official visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina during the week of 29 June. I look forward to this visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina to meet with government officials and civil society to discuss media freedom.

On 15 June I received information from the authorities that an investigation has been launched into the death threats received by Gadžo.

Bulgaria

On **4 February** I raised concern in a public statement over large fines imposed by the Financial Supervision Commission on newspapers in Bulgaria for publishing news stories on companies' financial activities and the banking sector. I said that large fines may lead to censorship in reporting on issues of public interest. I also raised concern about the FSC imposing additional fines for the newspapers refusing to disclose sources for the stories.

On **12 February** I received a letter (co-addressed to the Chairperson-in-Office Ivica Dačić) from the FSC in response to my statement of 4 February explaining the reasons for the actions.

On **9 April** my Office replied, saying that the European Directives on market abuse, upon which the Commission based its financial sanctions, expresses the need to protect press freedom and free expression. Media cannot be treated as participants in the financial dealings, and their investigative activities cannot be evaluated and monitored using legal provisions aimed at preventing market manipulation.

On **6 May** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Daniel Mitov to express concern over an attempt to seize the equipment of television station TV7. According to several reports, on 29 April private bailiffs, accompanied by a large police contingent, attempted to seize the equipment to settle a debt to Corporate Commercial Bank and take the station off the air. I expressed concern that the use of excessive force was intimidating and might endanger media freedom. I welcomed the fact that, following public criticism of the action by Prime Minister Boyko Borisov, Minister of Interior Romyana Bachvarova and the Union of Bulgarian Journalists, the bank's trustees granted TV7 another week to settle the debt.

Canada

On **13 May** I issued a public statement in follow up to a letter to Foreign Minister Rob Nicholson expressing concern that anti-terrorism legislation under consideration in Parliament could limit free expression rights.

My Office commissioned a legal review of the legislation, Bill C-51, which was undertaken by attorney Toby Mendel, executive director of the Centre for Law and Democracy in Nova Scotia. The review noted that international law is well established on the point that there is an important difference between mere advocacy or promotion of something, regardless of its harmfulness, and incitement to a harmful result. I said the proposed legislation criminalizes the unclear concepts of advocating or promoting acts or being reckless in recognizing they may be committed. Limits on the right to free expression should not be introduced into law when based on such vague notions.

The Senate passed Bill C-51 on 9 June.

(See Legal reviews)

Croatia

On **24 April** I wrote to the authorities following the burning of an effigy symbolizing Ante Tomić, a writer and columnist with the newspaper Slobodna Dalmacija, during an annual carnival in the municipality of Proložac. Prior to the burning, a statement was read blaming the journalist for their troubles over the last year.

I received a reply to my letter from Foreign Minister Vesna Pusić on 11 March sharing my concern regarding the burning of an effigy of journalist Ante Tomić and also explaining the popular tradition and ceremony surrounding the incident, which in the authorities' view was not a call to violence.

On **29 May** I issued a public statement condemning recent attacks and threats on Croatian journalists. On 28 May investigative journalist and blogger Željko Peratović was attacked at his home near Karlovac and a death threat was sent to Saša Leković, a journalist and president of the Croatian Association of Journalists.

Cyprus

On **9 April** I issued a public statement expressing concern about the decision of Parliament to approve a measure that criminalizes the denial of war crimes. The bill penalizes the denial or the gross degradation of war crimes recognized as such by the Parliament through a unanimous decision or a unanimous resolution. Those convicted face prison terms of up to five years and a fine of €10,000.

I said that the measure raised serious concerns about compliance with international freedom of expression standards. I noted that the right to openly discuss questions of a sensitive or controversial nature should have been taken into consideration by the authorities. Criminalizing debates on history, even those including false or offensive statements, is not conducive to a better understanding among people.

On 29 April I received a reply from Yiannakis L. Omirou, President of the House of Representatives, assuring me that the right to freedom of speech and expression in any form is constitutionally protected in the country.

Denmark

On **15 February** I issued a public statement strongly condemning the attacks on the participants at the event “Art, Blasphemy and Freedom of Expression” in Copenhagen on 14 February. One man was left dead and three police were injured.

On **16 April** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Martin Lidegaard about the government’s decision to endorse the current criminal provisions on blasphemy. I regretted the decision and explained that such laws are incompatible with freedom of expression. I said that the right to profess a religion – or not to profess any – does not imply that the state must protect believers from criticism and attacks on their credos. Democracies allow for the possibility to openly discuss and challenge every single idea, dogma or belief, even if the discussion is shocking, disturbing or offensive. I also pointed out that blasphemy laws run counter to international recommendations. I encouraged the government to reconsider its views.

Estonia

On **16 December** I wrote to the authorities to inquire about the reasons for the arrest of Italian journalist Giulietto Chiesa in Tallinn on 15 December. According to media reports, Chiesa was arrested and taken to a police station for questioning shortly after he arrived to attend a conference. In their reply dated 17 December I was informed that the Ministry of Interior refused an entry visa prior to Chiesa’s arrival. At the police station Chiesa was informed about this decision, his rights were explained, and he was asked to leave the country. He was released the same day and left the country on 16 December. I was assured that the denial of entry had nothing to do with his journalism activities, but was aimed to protect Estonian security and public order. In January, I learned from news reports that

Chiesa would be able to return to Estonia as the government decided not to extend the entry ban.

France

On **2 December** I wrote to Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius about a recent court judgment against the local weekly newspaper L'Agglorieuse in a criminal defamation case. The editor and a journalist were fined €1,000 and the newspaper was ordered to pay €88,000 in damages. I invited the authorities to decriminalize defamation and, in civil cases, require damage awards to be based on harm suffered and take into account the economic situation of the media or journalist concerned.

In a 29 December reply the Foreign Ministry indicated that the defendant appealed to the Court of Cassation. My Office was told that the fines imposed were for civil, not criminal defamation. The Ministry added that, in conformity with the law of the European Court of Human Rights, defamation and insult verdicts lead to jail sentences only in very specific cases, the criminal action offers certain guarantees to the parties that the civil one does not and there is a relatively short statutory limitation on sentences of three months in order to protect freedom of expression.

On **7 January** in a public statement I strongly condemned a terrorist attack at the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris that left 12 dead of which 8 were Charlie Hebdo staff including cartoonists Cabu, Charb, Honoré, Tignous and Wolinski. Two gunmen entered the editorial offices, opened fire and fled. This was the deadliest attack in the history of the French press and the third attack on French newspapers in recent years.

On 11 January I joined a unity rally of more than 2.5 million people held in Paris for the victims of the 7 January attack and for freedom of expression.

On **6 February** the Council of State affirmed a decision by an administrative court to prohibit a performance by the comedian Dieudonné M'Bala M'Bala. Holding “the exercise of freedom of expression is a condition for democracy and one of the guarantees of the respect of other rights and freedoms” the Council of State echoed the words I used in my letter to Minister of Interior Manuel Valls on the issue in January 2014.

On **30 March** in a public statement I warned that unilateral decisions by the Interior Ministry, without judicial oversight, to block five websites for allegedly causing or promoting terrorism represents a serious threat to free expression and free media. I used this opportunity to also mention that other anti-terrorist legislation in some OSCE countries may curb free expression and urged the French authorities to reconsider the parts of the anti-terrorist law enabling website blocking, which was passed in November 2014.

On 1 April the authorities replied in a public statement that France has to take preventive measures in reaction to a very serious terrorist threat and that the blocking of websites is done according to principles of necessity, proportionality and transparency, with the involvement of both an administrative authority and the independent National Commission for Information Technology and Individual Freedom. In a 2011 decision the Constitutional Council said that the blocking of websites is permitted by the French Constitution.

On **9 April** in a public statement I condemned a serious cyberattack on the French television network TV5Monde which blocked its broadcasts, websites and social networks for several hours.

On **16 April** I wrote to Foreign Minister Fabius to share my concern about draft law No. 2669 on the collection of information that would establish new communication-monitoring practices and investigative methods and grant law enforcement agencies special surveillance powers, without judicial oversight. I expressed specific concern about the impact the law might have on the right of journalists to protect the confidentiality of their sources.

On **6 May** in a public statement I urged lawmakers to reconsider provisions of the above mentioned draft law No. 2669 expanding surveillance, which was adopted by the National Assembly on 5 May and sent to the Senate for debate.

On 11 May the authorities replied in a public statement that the draft law respects the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality. Under the law, collection of information activities would be submitted for prior authorization to an administrative authority comprised of judges, experts and parliamentarians. The reply also said that the text still has to be considered by the Senate and that the President has called on the Constitutional Council to guarantee that the text respects fundamental freedoms.

The law, with amendments, was adopted by the Senate on 9 June. Deputies from the Senate and the Assembly have agreed on the final text and adoption by the Assembly is expected on 24 June. Then the law then will be considered by the Constitutional Council.

Georgia

On **23 February** I wrote to the authorities for information regarding the draft law “On state secrets” and asked to review it before adoption, so it balances the concerns of the state with the right of the public and media to obtain important public information. I expressed the readiness of my Office to provide necessary policy recommendations and to commission a legal analysis of the legislation. I also offered assistance in providing an evaluation of a law on freedom of information which is being discussed.

On **10 March** I wrote to the authorities sharing my concern regarding the attack on Irakli Gedenidze, a photojournalist with the news agency InterPressNews, who was beaten while covering a public protest in Tbilisi. He suffered several injuries and his camera was broken.

In a 6 April response the authorities said a suspected attacker had been identified and detained but later released on bail by the court. I was also told that the investigation continues based on the legal theory of interference with the professional activity of journalists.

Germany

On **12 January** I wrote to the authorities about an arson attack on the car of photojournalist Christian Jäger on 27 December in Berlin and an attack at the Hamburger Morgenpost on 11 January.

Jäger previously received threats from neo-Nazis and his car was burned in April 2014.

On 24 February the authorities wrote to inform me that a special unit of the police is investigating the attack on Jäger. Forensic analysis and interrogations of suspects had been carried out but did not yield sufficient evidence. No group has claimed responsibility.

The authorities also informed me that a special department has been formed within the Hamburg criminal investigative police for a probe into the arson attack on Hamburger Morgenpost. The police have put protection measures in place for media in Hamburg.

Greece

On **8 April** I issued a public statement calling for the decriminalization of defamation and condemning the sentence imposed on investigative journalist Kostas Vaxevanis, who wrote about banking practices in Greece. He was convicted of libeling financier Andreas Vgenopoulos and was given a jail sentence of 26 months, suspended for three years. The ruling restricts the freedom to report on matters of public interest and increases the pressure imposed on investigative journalists.

Vaxevanis based his article on official documents, making the conviction even less defensible. I said that international standards call for the protection of reporting when it contributes to public debates on matters of legitimate concern. Vaxevanis faces 42 additional legal proceedings for his reporting. I will follow these cases and I look forward to updates regarding the outcome of his appeal.

On **29 April** I publicly welcomed a decision of Parliament to reopen the public service broadcaster ERT. The move is an important and long-awaited step to protect media pluralism after the abrupt closure of the broadcaster almost two years ago. At that time about 3,000 employees were dismissed.

I said that public service media play an indispensable role in democracies by providing pluralistic and objective information to citizens and expressed trust that the new law will ensure the editorial and financial independence of the broadcaster.

Italy

On **20 January** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Paolo Gentiloni to express concern about cases involving the safety of journalists, impunity from prosecution and defamation proceedings against media. I called attention to the scores of incidents against media representatives that had occurred in Italy during 2014, including assaults, death threats, property damage and criminal defamation proceedings. I provided a summary of the incidents and asked for information on the most relevant cases.

On **20 May** I received a letter from Foreign Minister Gentiloni with Italy's remarks to the cases on defamation lawsuits and attacks against journalists. It explains that the defense of truth, public interest and responsible journalism are largely recognized under Italian case law and that currently various bills to amend the criminal defamation are under discussion before Parliament. In particular, the Bill No. 925, currently tabled before the Chamber of Deputies for a second reading, introduces amendments to limit the use of criminal sanctions for defamation, abolish prison sentences while attempting to achieve a more appropriate balance between the protection of reputation and freedom of expression. The remarks also included

information about the ongoing police investigations into four of the cases of attacks against journalists raised in my letter.

Kazakhstan

On **2 December** I wrote to Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov about the blocking of the online news portal kloop.kg and several webpages in Kazakhstan.

On 26 November kloop.kg was blocked after refusing a takedown request by the Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) of the Kazakh State Technical Service. CERT said a report posted on kloop.kg contained illegal content which could spread ISIL terrorist propaganda. On 27 November a number of webpages that reported the story, including azattyk.org, vlast.kz and tegrinews.kz were reported to be blocked, too.

I referred to OSCE commitments, including the 2002 Porto Ministerial Council that points out “the positive role the media can play in promoting tolerance and understanding among religions, beliefs, cultures and peoples, as well as for raising awareness for the threat of terrorism” and the 2004 Sofia and the 2006 Brussels Ministerial Councils’ calls for exchange of information on the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes and to identify possible strategies to combat this threat, while ensuring respect for international human rights obligations and standards, including freedom of opinion and expression. I also offered assistance to draft and implement legislation to prevent the abuse of information technology for terrorist purposes, as stipulated in the 2001 Bucharest Ministerial Council Decision.

I noted that while governments have the legitimate right to fight threats of terrorism, there must be a clear distinction between calls for acts of terrorism and media simply reporting on issues related to terrorism. Media should remain free to cover society and raise awareness about the dangers related to terrorism. Blocking goes against OSCE media freedom commitments.

Unfortunately kloop.kg remains blocked in Kazakhstan. I hope that the responsible authorities reconsider their decision and access will be re-established.

On **6 January** I wrote to Foreign Minister Idrissov to express my concern about an attack on Gulzhan Yergaliyeva, chief editor of the weekly magazine ADAMBol, on 23 December.

According to reports, Yergaliyeva was attacked at the entrance to her house in Almaty. She reportedly lost consciousness after being hit by an assailant who then fled without taking valuables.

I took note that the authorities have initiated an investigation into the case and expressed hope that it would be conducted swiftly and thoroughly.

I also regretted that on 24 December an Almaty district court ordered ADAMBol magazine to be closed after a hearing initiated by the Almaty Akimat.

I referred to my previous public statement from 26 November about an injunction issued to stop the distribution and publication of the magazine.

I noted with regret that on 27 February an Almaty appeals court upheld the closure.

On **13 March** I wrote to Foreign Minister Idrissov regarding two criminal proceedings against journalists of the newspaper Uralskaya Nedelya.

Preliminary investigations had been started against Mariya Kovaleva for “knowingly spreading false information” in a story about a Russian citizen who claimed he received medical treatment in a hospital in Uralsk after being wounded in eastern Ukraine.

I took note that in April this case was closed by the court.

Criminal insult proceedings had been filed against Tamara Eslyamova and Talgat Umarov for a story published in April 2014 on a court case against an official accused of embezzling funds. The filing came after a civil court judgment on the same issue requiring the newspaper to pay approximately €1,500 in damages and to publish a correction in the newspaper.

I took note that the court on 20 March closed this case as it found no evidence of a crime.

Notwithstanding the decisions of the courts, I see in these cases illustrations of much-needed reforms of speech-related provisions in the criminal code, in particular the crime of “knowingly spreading false information” which could result in a prison term of up to 10 years.

On **7 April** my Office submitted a review on the “Concept of Interaction between Judges of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Mass Media” thus assisting the OSCE Programme Office in Astana in its efforts to support the Supreme Court to develop a public information policy.

The review by Sergey Chizhkov, a Senior Researcher at the Institute of Philosophy and Director of the NGO Guild of court reporters in Moscow, found a number of important ideas as well as some shortcomings. It recommended not considering media as a means of conveying information to the public from the judiciary but an independent and important institution of civil society, which has the mission to inform the public.

It also recommended to provide equal rights to all media, regardless of their participation or non-participation in joint information projects described in the Concept; to remove from the Concept the principle of "non-interference by the media in the administration of justice"; to avoid involving journalists in "image projects" and to not generally exempt court proceedings from transparency policies or to more clearly define the exceptions.

(See Legal reviews)

On **20 May** I wrote to the authorities regarding the arrest of Yaroslav Golyshkin, an editor of the newspaper Versiya in Pavlodar, who is under investigation for allegedly taking part in a blackmailing scheme against the akim of the Pavlodar region.

According to his colleagues, Golyshkin was working on a crime story allegedly involving the son of a local akim before being arrested on 14 May for blackmail. Golyshkin was initially a witness in this case.

Kyrgyzstan

On **29 January** I wrote to the authorities regarding the assault on Bolot Satarkulov, an independent investigative journalist.

According to reports on 24 January Satarkulov sustained head and rib injuries when he was attacked by a group near his home and his camera was stolen.

I noted that an investigation had been launched into this incident.

Latvia

On **27 January** I wrote to the authorities to learn more about the arrest of cameraman Sergejs Medvedevs in Riga on 26 January. According to media reports, Medvedevs, who is working for TV3 in Latvia, was arrested while filming a peaceful demonstration outside the Russian Embassy in Riga. In the letter I also welcomed Prime Minister Laimdota Straujuma's immediate response calling the arrests unacceptable. I received a reply from the authorities dated 3 February informing me that an official investigation by the State Police had been launched and that I would be informed about the outcome.

On **8 June** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Edgars Rinkēvičs and asked for updated information on the investigation into the attack on journalist Leonids Jakobsons that took place on 29 March 2012. According to Jakobsons, no charges have been filed although three years have passed since the incident occurred.

Luxembourg

On **28 April** I wrote to Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Jean Asselborn and issued a public statement to express concern about criminal charges brought against Edouard Perrin, a French investigative journalist accused of being a co-author or accomplice to theft, breaching professional confidentiality and fraudulent access to data systems. Perrin exposed an alleged system of tax avoidance for multinational corporations in Luxembourg. I pointed out that investigative journalism is one of the pillars of free media and asked Minister Asselborn for more information on the case.

In a 26 May reply the Minister indicated that the court operates under the presumption of innocence and that Perrin's right not to divulge his source is not called into question. The same holds for the dissemination of information by the press.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

On **17 January** in a public statement I condemned the arrest of journalist Tomislav Kežarovski, following the imposition of a two-year prison sentence by the Skopje Court of Appeal. Following five months of pre-trial detention, Kežarovski was convicted in October 2013 for an article he wrote in 2008 for Reporter 92 magazine in which he allegedly revealed the identity of a witness in a murder case. He has been in house detention since then.

On appeal the prison sentence was lowered from 4.5 to 2 years and the court ruled to incarcerate Kežarovski for the remainder of his sentence. On the evening of 16 January police apprehended Kežarovski at his home and took him to prison.

On **27 February** in a public statement I called for a swift investigation into allegations of wiretapping journalists.

On **31 March** I issued a public statement to express concern over a decision by the Data Verification Commission in Skopje to declare Jadranka Kostova, editor-in-chief of weekly magazine Fokus, a secret services informant from 1993 to 1996. In a letter to Commission President Tome Adziev, I said that I do not question lustration as such, but that it should not be used as a tool to suppress critical voices. Taking into account that Fokus already is under pressure and is the defendant in many civil defamation lawsuits with excessively high damage awards against the magazine and its journalists, the Commission's decision could be seen as pressuring the magazine, endangering the media outlet and, consequently, having a chilling effect on media freedom.

During a visit to Vienna on 15 April, Minister of Information Society and Administration Ivo Ivanovski requested an expert opinion on the best practices regarding must-carry and must-offer rules for cable operators and broadcasters. On 29 May I submitted the analysis, prepared by Jean-François Furnémont, former Chairman of the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities and Director General of the Supreme Audiovisual Council. The analysis is available at www.osce.org/fom/66082.

(See Legal reviews)

On **22 April** in a public statement, I called on the authorities to immediately investigate a death threat against the editor of NOVA TV, Borjan Jovanovski, and his family. This act adds to the already fragile media environment situation in the country and sends another message that critical voices are to be silenced. I also raised concern over death threats on Facebook that journalist Zoran Bojarovski received. Bojarovski reported the incident to the police and an investigation has been launched.

I called on the government to reverse the deteriorating media freedom situation in the country. The recent developments include conviction and subsequent release on parole of journalist Tomislav Kežarovski; the declaration of Jadranka Kostova as a secret services informant and the allegations of more than 100 journalists being wiretapped.

On **28 April** in a public statement I called on the authorities to guarantee a healthy media environment in order to ensure journalists' safety following a recent wave of incidents where journalists were verbally attacked, intimidated or prevented from doing their work in the cities of Skopje and Bitola.

On **23 May** I issued a public statement condemning the latest attack on a journalist in Skopje. On the evening of 22 May Ivanovski, owner of the online news portal Maktel, was beaten by two individuals. He sustained injuries to his head and back and had to seek medical treatment. Ivanovski reported the attack to the police. I also addressed the issue that the recent high numbers of violent attacks against journalists are leading to an atmosphere of impunity.

Moldova

On **17 February** I wrote to the authorities to express my concern about regulations adopted by the Permanent Bureau of Parliament on 9 February which introduce new accreditation requirements for journalists working in Parliament. According to reports, the criteria for granting accreditation includes a provision which requires media to be “independent and have a balanced editorial policy that guarantees pluralism of opinions.” I urged the authorities to carefully reconsider such a requirement.

I also shared my concern about a criminal case initiated against Vadim Ungureanu, a journalist with the Deschide.md website, on various charges, including organizing civil unrest and expressed hope that these developments are not related to the journalist’s professional activities.

On 19 March I received a response from the authorities saying the final version of the new accreditation requirements excluded the restrictive requirements for journalists. I was also informed that the criminal investigation against Vadim Ungureanu is based on calls for violence and civil unrest and is not related to his professional activity.

On **23 March** I wrote to the authorities and conveyed concern regarding the denial of entry to Moldova for a number of Russian media members. According to reports, on 23 March Armen Gasparyan, journalist with Rossiya Segodnya news agency, was denied entry at the Chisinau airport and banned from visiting the country until 2020. On 18 March a crew of the Russian State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company which reportedly planned to cover local elections in the Gagauz autonomous region was deported from the country.

On **16 April** I wrote to Chairman of Parliament Andrian Candu and issued a public statement on **22 April** expressing concern about amendments to the Audiovisual Code and the Law on Freedom of Expression. I said that despite legitimate concerns including state security, state sovereignty and the protection of human rights, a number of the proposed provisions are excessive and not in line with best international practices. They may be abused and result in media self-censoring its work.

I presented a legal analysis of the amendments, commissioned by my Office, and expressed hope that the proposed changes will be carefully reviewed by the members of Parliament so that the law does not pose undue limits on free speech, free media and free flow of information.

(See Legal reviews)

On **2 June** I again wrote to the authorities to convey concern regarding the growing list of denials of entry of Russian media professionals to Moldova. On 28 May Dmitry Kaistro, a journalist with the Russian State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company, was denied entry at the Chisinau airport and banned from visiting the country until 2019. Earlier, in April, crews with Russian state-owned Zvezda TV and TV Tsentr channels were reportedly denied entry to the country.

Mongolia

On **23 January** I wrote to Foreign Minister Lundeg Purevsuren regarding the criminal conviction of L. Davaapil, a researcher on railway infrastructure. Davaapil was ordered in December to pay a fine the equivalent of €4,300 for defaming the former Minister of Road and Transportation, A. Gansukh, in social media. Davaapil allegedly accused Gansukh of mismanaging public funds.

I noted that in August 2014 Gansukh was the first person convicted of criminal defamation through the use of social media and sentenced to three months in prison.

I encouraged the authorities to abolish criminal defamation.

On 4 March I wrote to Foreign Minister Purevsuren and presented him with a legal review of the draft law “On Freedom of the Media” commissioned by my Office that was scheduled to be discussed in Parliament in spring.

(See Legal reviews)

On **2-6 May** I made my first official visit to Mongolia.

I met with the speaker of the Parliament, Zandaakhügiin Enkhbold, and Foreign Minister Purevsuren. I also met other senior officials, including Member of Parliament Migeedorj Batchimeg, the head of the Communications Regulatory Commission Batsukh Balgansuren, and the chairman of the Information technology, Post and Telecommunications Authority, Tsaagaan-Uvgun Jadambaa.

I also held meetings with journalists and NGOs and met with the Chairperson of the Mongolian Media council, Chinbat Nomin, and other representatives of the council to discuss challenges to free media.

On **6 May** I issued a public statement saying that Mongolia has in many ways taken on regional leadership in free media and acknowledging the authorities’ commitment to improve media freedom.

I noted the establishment of the first independent media council and stressed the importance of continued support for self-regulation.

I also stressed the importance of establishing a truly independent media regulator, fostering financial sustainability and editorial independence of the public service broadcaster and called for more transparency of media ownership.

I pointed to the importance of politicians and public figures to show tolerance to criticism and refraining from pressing criminal defamation charges against journalists and bloggers.

In the statement I also positively noted the progress on the digital switchover and the efforts to provide access to the Internet to all.

Montenegro

On **3 May** my Office commissioned a two-week campaign against impunity which consisted of full-page ads in four daily newspapers (Dan, Vijesti, Pobjeda i Dnevne novine), and spots on all major television stations (RTCG, VIJESTI, Pink M, Prva, Atlas, TV Niksic, RTV Pljevlja, TV Novi, RTV Boka, RTV Budva, RTV Korona, RTV 777, RTV Glas Plava, RTV Teuta, RTV Srpska), and Internet sites: Vijesti, CDM, Portal Analitika).

My Office continues to address the issue of impunity in Montenegro and supports the better functioning of the Commission for Monitoring the Investigations of Cases of Attacks on Journalists that will lead to investigations and prosecution of the perpetrators and the masterminds of the attacks.

On **13 May** I wrote to Foreign Minister Igor Lukšić regarding two attacks on journalists. On 7 May Zorica Bulatović, a correspondent of the daily newspaper Dnevne Novine, found that her car, which was parked in front of her home in Kolašin, had been destroyed. A day earlier, the windshield was broken of a car belonging to Milovan Novović, a correspondent of the newspaper DAN. Both journalists are known for their investigative reporting on alleged corruption in local government. According to media reports, they have also been verbally attacked by local politicians following publication of articles in recent months.

My Office, together with the Council of Europe, has been working to establish a media working group and provide expertise to revise the journalists code of ethics. The first meeting took place on 17 July during which the media community expressed its readiness to improve media self-regulation in the country and to start confidence building among media members.

My Office has chaired five additional meetings of the working group and arbitrated all correspondence and discussions on redrafting the code.

The latest meeting, on 19 May, resulted in an agreement on a final draft code. The next stage will be a public consultation with media and civil society, to be held in Podgorica later this month. My Office will continue to support this initiative to establish an effective self-regulatory system in the country.

In a 9 June letter Foreign Minister Lukšić reaffirmed the need to thoroughly investigate the two attacks on journalists I addressed in my letter of 13 May. The Minister said that the Police Directorate is working intensively to resolve these cases and that the government is committed to media freedom.

Netherlands

On 9 January I received a response from Minister of Foreign Affairs Bert Koenders to my letter of 3 September in which I raised concern about criminal penalties for speech offenses in the Netherlands and called on the government to initiate legal reforms that would fully decriminalize defamation. I was informed that after discussing the issue with the Minister of Security and Justice, their assessment was that though freedom of expression needed to be promoted, international human rights conventions protecting freedom of expression and the case law based on them suggest that this right is limited when comments constitute serious defamation or incite discrimination, hatred or violence.

On **30 January** I wrote to the authorities to commend them for their swift action which ensured the safety of the broadcast staff during an incident at the national broadcaster NOS. On 29 January a man, carrying what appeared to be a weapon, forced his way into the premises and demanded airtime to address the nation.

Norway

On **4 June** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Børge Brende and expressed concern about proposed amendments to the Freedom of Information Act that may affect the media's ability to report on issues of public interest on a local level. The proposal only concerns local governments that are practicing a parliamentary system. In these systems it is proposed that governments may exempt documents and agendas created for preparatory meetings, where no decisions are made, from the disclosure requirements under the Freedom of Information Act.

The law was approved on a first reading on 8 June.

Poland

On 30 April I learned that local authorities on 29 April decided to withdraw the residence permit of Russian journalist Leonid Sviridov, a correspondent for the news agency Rossiya Segodnya. The decision is not final. I raised his case on 27 October 2014. (See Report to the Permanent Council of 28 November).

Russian Federation

On **8 December** I wrote to the authorities asking them to carefully review an incident involving TV-2, a Tomsk-based private broadcaster well known in Russia for its independent and critical reporting. At the end of November, TV-2 received an official letter from the Tomsk Regional Television and Radio Broadcasting Centre (a regional branch of the state-owned Russian Television and Radio Broadcasting Network, RTRS). The letter notified TV-2 that its broadcasting service contract would be unilaterally terminated on 31 December 2014 and would not be extended which would effectively result in switching off TV-2 terrestrial broadcasting. No grounds for this decision were provided. The decision follows a dispute between TV-2 and RTRS earlier in 2014.

I said that, if enforced, the RTRS decision would effectively endanger media pluralism in the region and set a dangerous precedent aimed at silencing independent voices by the state-run companies for ambiguous reasons.

On 9 December I learned that an investigation into the attack on journalist Lev Schlosberg in Pskov has been discontinued, reportedly due to an absence of suspects. I raised his case on 30 August 2014. (See Report to the Permanent Council of 28 November).

On **9 December** I wrote to the authorities regarding the 8 December attack on Yevgeny Mezdrikov, editor-in-chief of the independent information portal Tayga.info, in Novosibirsk. According to reports, two intruders attacked Mezdrikov in the editorial office of Tayga.info. The journalist sustained injuries, including bruises and abrasions.

I expressed hope that the attack on Mezdrikov would be swiftly and thoroughly investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice.

On 1 June I learned that one person was found guilty and sentenced to one year in jail. However, this person was promptly amnestied and released.

On 23 December I received a letter from the authorities in which they expressed concern about legal developments in Lithuania. It pointed to proposed amendments to the Law on Provision of Information to the Public that, among other things, will allow the media regulator to impose fines on “hostile propaganda and misinformation.” It was said that the amendments were clearly aimed at further restricting freedom of the media and reducing the room for critical voices in Lithuania. It referred to recent actions taken by the media regulator to suspend Russian-language television transmissions. It also raised the newly adopted law on Cyber Security that gives the police a too-broad mandate to switch off Internet users and to order disclosure of information from Internet providers.

In my reply of **20 January** I explained my position both related to propaganda and to participating States’ various efforts to respond to propaganda, referring to international standards on war propaganda and hate speech. I wrote that to my knowledge, the amendments to the law were still being debated in the Seimas (Parliament). As to the cybersecurity law, I said that it is the government’s duty to secure unhindered, uncensored and non-discriminatory access to the online environment. Cybersecurity laws for the interest of national security must be narrowly tailored and applied in accordance with international standards and commitments. Only in exceptional circumstances may temporary disconnections of Internet users be a justifiable response to immediate prevention of cyber incidents and criminal activity; and it must be subject to strict scrutiny.

On **30 December** following the absence of progress in the incident involving TV-2, I issued a public statement calling on the authorities to prevent the shutdown of the channel’s terrestrial broadcasts on 1 January and subsequent loss of a broadcasting license. I said that along with a *de facto* advertising ban on cable networks, an issue which I raised in July 2014, the closure of TV-2 would threaten the very existence of independent media outlets and critical voices in the Tomsk region. (See Report to the Permanent Council of 28 November).

On 28 January I received a letter from the authorities providing information on several cases I have raised, including the shutdown of terrestrial transmissions of TV-2 channel. It was indicated that the channel possesses a universal license which allows for cable broadcasting after terrestrial transmission has been shut down. Therefore, the right of citizens to seek, receive and impart information would not be violated.

On **15 January** I wrote to the authorities to express my concern about an attack on Sergei Vilkov, a journalist with *Obshchestvennoye Mneniye* magazine in Saratov. On 13 January Vilkov was attacked near his home by two people who beat him and fled.

I said this attack is especially disturbing given the 26 August attack on Alexander Krutov, another journalist with the same magazine, who was brutally beaten by a group of people, which I also raised in my public statement of 27 August 2014. (See Report to the Permanent Council of 28 November).

In a reply of 16 February by the authorities, I was told that the attack on Vilkov was being investigated.

On **16 January** I wrote to the authorities in reply to the letter of 23 December on issues involving journalists of the Russian LifeNews television channel in Ukraine and an Italian journalist in Estonia. Details on the cases can be found in the respective sections on those countries.

On **22 January** I issued a public statement denouncing the conviction of journalist Sergei Reznik, an investigative journalist and blogger in Rostov-on-Don. The Leninsky Court of Rostov-on-Don found Reznik guilty on charges of false accusation and insulting public officials and sentenced him to three years in a penal colony. Reznik was also banned from working as a journalist for a year after having served his sentence.

I said that punishing and sending journalists to prison for doing their job is unacceptable and, instead of ensuring protection and independence of members of the media, the authorities are effectively limiting the space for public debate and the citizens' right to freedom of information.

On **28 January** I issued a public statement welcoming legislation that lifts the ban on commercials on pay television channels that broadcast 75 percent Russian content.

I also reiterated my call to end the ban on commercials completely because foreign channels that rely on advertising continue to be *de facto* barred from cable television in Russia.

I raised my concern about the ban on commercials in July 2014. (See Report to the Permanent Council of 28 November).

On **17 February** I wrote to the authorities in reply to their letter of 28 January regarding TV-2. I said that, according to the reports available to me, on 4 December 2014 the Federal Service for Supervision in the Sphere of Telecom, Information Technologies and Mass Communications (Roskomnadzor) had revoked its own decision of 19 November 2014 to extend the broadcast license of TV-2 until 2025. In the absence of an extended license, TV-2 was forced to cease cable broadcasts on 8 February, the date its licence expired.

I again called on the respective authorities to allow TV-2 to continue broadcasting, as the latest decisions of the responsible state institutions effectively endanger media pluralism in the Tomsk region.

On 2 April I learned that TV-2 failed to challenge in court the RTRS decision to switch off terrestrial broadcasting.

On 13 April I learned that the channel also failed to challenge in court Roskomnadzor's decision not to extend the broadcasting licence.

On **24 February** I issued a public statement regarding the continued intimidation of media NGOs in Russia, following the inspection of the Mass Media Defence Centre (MMDC) in Voronezh by the Justice Department of the region on 9 February. The inspection was carried out as part of an official procedure for including MMDC in the register of "foreign agents."

I said that discrimination against media organizations on vague grounds effectively infringes free expression and free media and I called on the authorities to stop such stigmatizing practices.

MMDC was subject to similar inspections in 2013 and 2014 along with other media organizations, including the Institute of Regional Press from St. Petersburg and the Institute for the Development of the Press (Siberia) in Novosibirsk. Both organizations were entered into the register of foreign agents.

I learned that on 26 February the authorities included MMDC in the register of foreign agents. On 15 April, the court in Voronezh fined MMDC for not voluntarily registering as a foreign agent.

On 25 April I learned that Moscow-based Public Foundation for Investigative Journalism 19/29 was also entered into the register of foreign agents. On 4 June, the foundation was fined for not voluntarily registering as a foreign agent.

On **31 March** I issued a public statement welcoming the sentences of two people for the murder of Abdulmalik Akhmedilov, deputy editor of the Makhachkala-based daily Hakikat and chief editor of the Sogratl newspaper, in August 2009 in Makhachkala, Dagestan.

On 30 March the Leninskiy District Court in Makhachkala sentenced gunman Murad Shuaibov to 10 and a half years and getaway driver Isa Abdurakhmanov to eight years in prison for the murder.

I also noted reports that the mastermind of the murder of Igor Domnikov, a Novaya Gazeta journalist killed in 2000, had been identified by the Investigative Committee. I expressed hope that the authorities would do their utmost to investigate and solve all remaining cases of attacks on journalists.

On **2 April** I wrote to Deputy Foreign Minister Alexey Meshkov in response to his letter of 5 March regarding several cases involving Russian journalists who work in Ukraine and certain Russian media broadcasting in Lithuania.

As the Russian Federation is, in effect, exercising control of Crimea, in my letter I brought to the Deputy Minister's attention the disturbing crackdown on independent and critical voices on the peninsula, including the threats, assaults, illegal interrogations and raids on certain media outlets and journalists and bloggers. I also stressed that the Crimean Tatar media has been especially affected and forced to cease their activities due to the repeated denials of official registration, a requirement imposed by Russian media law.

I requested an invitation for an official visit to Moscow to meet with high-level officials to discuss issues related to free media in the Russian Federation as well as in the OSCE region as a whole.

On **29 April** I wrote to the authorities to express concern about amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences adopted by the State Duma on 24 April. The law substantially increases penalties on media for producing or publishing materials containing public calls for and publicly justifying terrorist and extremist activities.

I said that while countering calls for terrorist activity is an essential objective of security policy in many OSCE participating States, the combination of general vagaries of the wording in anti-extremism legislation and the extremely high fines could bring about self-

ensorship of journalists, restrict media coverage of political issues and further limit free expression and the free flow of information.

On 2 May the president signed the law.

On 13 May I learned with regret that a court in Moscow discontinued the criminal case against the mastermind of the murder of Igor Domnikov, a *Novaya Gazeta* journalist killed in 2000, due to the defense of the statute of limitations.

On **20 May** I issued a public statement asking the authorities to veto a restrictive new law adopted by the State Duma which gives the Prosecutor General and deputies the authority to declare foreign or international NGOs “undesirable.” The law allows banning such organizations on suspicion of a threat to the country’s constitutional order, defense or national security.

I said that the broad and imprecise wording of this legislation would impose serious restrictions on a wide array of important democratic rights, including freedom of expression and media freedom.

Among other things, the law:

- suspends the right of the banned organizations to be among the founders of Russian media outlets;
- prohibits Russian mass media and online portals to disseminate information materials produced by these organizations;
- deprives local civil society organizations, including media NGOs, from receiving assistance from the banned foreign counterparts.

I noted that the law follows other restrictive legislation of 2012 requiring NGOs to register as “foreign agents,” which has had wide-reaching and crippling effects for NGOs working to protect and promote media freedom in Russia.

I noted with regret that on 23 May the president signed the law.

On **26 May** I wrote to the authorities conveying my concern regarding a denial of entry to Stevan Dojcinović, a journalist from Serbia. Reportedly, on 13 May at Moscow’s Sheremetyevo Airport the Border Guard Service detained Dojcinović, who works for the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, for 20 hours and then sent him back to Serbia. The journalist reportedly has been banned from entering the country until 2020.

On **27 May** I wrote to the authorities to express concern about an attack on Mikhail Zubkov, chief editor of the newspaper Pushkinskiy Vestnik in Pushkino, Moscow oblast. Zubkov was attacked and severely beaten by two people on 13 May. He suffered serious injuries, including a broken arm and a concussion.

On **15 June** I wrote to the authorities to convey my concern regarding the threats issued against Elena Milashina, an investigative journalist with *Novaya Gazeta*. On 19 May Grozny Inform, a state-owned information agency which was established by the Ministry of National Policy, External Relations, Press and Information of Chechen Republic, published an article

which suggested that Milashina could be punished for her reporting and could meet the fate of Anna Politkovskaya and Boris Nemtsov, both of whom were murdered.

I said it is unacceptable for journalists to receive such horrendous threats and expressed trust that the authorities would investigate this case and ensure Milashina's safety.

Serbia

On **25 November** I received a letter from Chairperson-in-Office, First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić informing me about the progress of investigations into hacking attacks on media websites and said that the Ministry of Internal Affairs is working on resolving cases of attacks on journalists that I previously raised.

Minister Dačić said that Serbia highly respects freedom of the media and expression and that the government and its officials condemn violence against journalists in the strongest terms, as well as any attempts to violate free media and free expression. He assured me that the competent institutions would continue to work on solving all reported cases of attacks on the media and their representatives. He also pointed out the readiness of Serbia, as the incoming OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, to work intensively with my Office and me.

On **23 December** I met with Minister of Culture and Information Ivan Tasovac to discuss the plans and priorities of the incoming OSCE Chairmanship and media freedom issues in Serbia and the OSCE region. Minister Tasovac informed me of efforts to reform the public service broadcaster, introduce digitalization and ensure that the state ends its involvement in media ownership by implementing recently adopted media laws.

On **11 February** I met with Minister Tasovac to discuss the OSCE Chairmanship's work plan for media freedom issues. Among other things, we agreed on a conference on journalists' safety to be hosted by the Chairmanship in Belgrade in March. During the meeting Minister Tasovac provided a comprehensive update on media freedom issues in Serbia raised by my Office. He also supplied detailed information on the process for implementing media laws.

On **12 March** I wrote to Minister of Interior Nebojša Stefanović to express my concern about recent threats to Brankica Stanković, author and editor of the programme "Insajder" on B92 television. My Office has been calling on the authorities since 2010 to fully investigate threats against her. It is clear that the campaign against Stanković is a threat to her safety, a fact that needs to be seriously addressed by the relevant law enforcement bodies that should investigate, identify and prosecute the people responsible for the continuing intimidation. I am not aware of any change in circumstances that would lead to removing the protection she was originally provided six years ago.

On **27 March** I met with Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić to discuss media freedom issues such as the safety of journalists, the recently adopted media laws that are an essential foundation for reforming the public service broadcaster, privatization of state-owned media and digitalization.

During my visit to Belgrade, I participated in a two-day conference on the safety of journalists organized by the OSCE Chairmanship. I also met with Foreign Minister Dačić,

Minister Tasovac, the management of the public service broadcaster RTS, the regulatory authority, media organizations and journalists.

On **9 April** which is the 21st anniversary of her death, I welcomed the announcement of a new forensic investigation into the death of Serbian journalist Dada Vujasinović, who was found dead in her apartment. I called on the authorities to fully investigate this and all other deaths of journalists.

On **13 April** I wrote to Foreign Minister Dačić to bring to his attention the attacks on websites of Peščanik and Danas on 3 April and 6 April. I also called attention to the recent attack on the home of Milorad Vučelić, editor-in-chief of the weekly magazine Pečat.

On **23 April** I received a reply from Minister Tasovac, providing details about the cyberattack on Peščanik and Danas. I was also told that there is an ongoing police investigation into the attack on Vučelić's home.

On **28 May** I wrote to Minister Tasovac to bring to his attention the death threats received recently by Danilo Redžepović, the editor of Teleprompter.rs website. According to Redžepović, on 21 May he received an explicit photo of a corpse with a clear message to stop whatever he is doing. The following day he received another message from the same source with an article about a man who killed himself with a hand grenade. Redžepović reported these threats to the police on 27 May.

On 4 June I received a reply from Minister Tasovac, informing me about the ongoing investigation into the threats received by Redžepović.

Slovakia

On **21 January** I welcomed a court decision to dismiss defamation charges against the daily newspaper Nový Čas because the decision upholds the right of journalists to report on matters of public interest. Several members of the Slovak judiciary had sued the newspaper for defamation demanding public apologies and high damage awards.

On **7 April** I received a letter from certain members of the judiciary in relation to several public statements I issued in 2013-2015 (including the latest statement from 21 January) regarding lawsuits against media by members of the judiciary seeking high damage awards for defamation. In their letter, seven lawyers, among them plaintiffs in the cases referred to, ask me to refrain from making statements regarding the ongoing court proceedings and said that I did not possess all necessary information to make an informed statement.

On **9 April** my Office replied saying my role is to monitor and assist participating States to comply with media freedom commitments and not to judge facts which are the subject of lawsuits. The Representative's Mandate includes raising concern over potential violations occurring under the auspices of any entity, including the judiciary, which, like politicians and other public officials, is not immune from public comment.

Slovenia

On **14 November** I wrote to Foreign Minister Karl Erjavec to express concern over possible criminal charges against Peter Lovšin and Meta Roglič, journalists for the daily newspaper Dnevnik in Ljubljana. They also have been subject to charges brought by the Slovene Intelligence and Security Agency. I have asked the authorities to provide additional information on this case.

On 26 November I received a letter from Foreign Minister Erjavec to inform me of the developments in the criminal proceedings against the journalists. The Minister assured me that his government is determined to respect the standards of media freedom and that the respective legislation of 2008 is too restrictive.

On **27 February** in a public statement I urged the authorities to amend provisions of the Criminal Code allowing for the prosecution of journalists, following questioning of two journalists by the state public prosecutor in a defamation case. Primož Cirman and Tomaž Modič, journalists with Dnevnik, were brought before an investigating judge over an alleged insult against the Competition Protection Agency and some of its staff. If convicted, the journalists could face up to six months in prison.

On **18 March** I wrote to Foreign Minister Erjavec to express concern following another criminal prosecution of a journalist. On 3 March, the Ljubljana Local Court handed down a suspended prison sentence to photojournalist Jani Božič for taking a photograph of a private phone text message received by a former Prime Minister in Parliament and publishing it. According to media reports, the photojournalist's accreditation for the National Assembly was revoked and the State Prosecutor's Office filed charges accusing him of committing a criminal offense by violating the right to privacy. In this and previous cases I have raised, there seems to be a disregard for public interest as a legitimate right for journalists to publish information, which needs to be safeguarded, not prosecuted.

On **17 April** in a public statement I welcomed a decision made on 15 April to drop all charges against Slovenian journalist Anuška Delić, an investigative journalist with the daily newspaper Delo, who was prosecuted for publishing classified information allegedly leaked from the National Intelligence and Security Agency in November 2011.

In a letter on 10 April Foreign Minister Erjavec wrote to me about the intention of the authorities to amend Article 260 of the Criminal Code (which refers to disclosure of classified information) and introduce a partial exclusion from criminal liability for disclosure of classified information if the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs maintaining its secrecy.

On **7 May** in a public statement I once again called on the authorities to reform the Criminal Code to protect journalists reporting on classified information in the public interest, following an incident where Bojan Požar, editor of the pozareport.si online news portal, was called in for questioning for publishing an article alleging that public figures and politicians were wiretapped by the intelligence agency SOVA ahead of the 2011 parliamentary elections.

I welcome the fact that on 28 May the government sent to the National Assembly amendments to the Criminal Code repealing Article 260. If adopted, the defense of public interest would be allowed when disclosing classified information.

Spain

On **13 January** I wrote to the authorities about the draft bill on Public Security under discussion in Parliament. I indicated that the draft included a restriction which directly affects free expression and free media because it establishes that the unauthorized use of images or personal or professional data of authorities or members of the security forces which could jeopardize their family or personal safety constitute a serious administrative infraction punishable with a fine up to €30,000. Despite this provision also referring to the need to respect the fundamental right of information, I stressed the fact that such a severe administrative sanction should only be imposed in cases of clear and demonstrable risk for the safety of security agents.

Turkey

On **15 December** I wrote to Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu and issued a public statement calling for the immediate release of detained journalists arrested the previous day by police during raids on a newspaper and television station. I said that the arrests once again showed that a revision of the laws allowing for the imprisonment of journalists was urgently needed. I added that in recent years there was a substantial decrease of imprisoned journalists in Turkey, but the laws most often used to imprison journalists, including certain provisions of the Criminal Code and the Anti-Terror Law, are still awaiting reform.

On 23 January I wrote to Minister Çavuşoğlu to call attention to pending omnibus legislation that would weaken free expression, including a bill dealing with foundations and associations that would permit ministers and the prime minister to block any website, without judicial oversight, containing content that they consider a threat to public order, national security, the people's right to life or general health, their security or property or their rights and freedoms. I warned that the article would give unprecedented powers to political figures to decide on issues that should fall under the sole jurisdiction of independent courts.

I listed further elements of the bill that would represent a disproportionate sanction and a significant obstruction into freedom of expression on the Internet. I noted that Parliament should hold public hearings with all stakeholders in order to ensure that the article would not limit the constitutionally protected right to freedom of expression.

The letter also recalled recent examples of detaining journalists, including that of Sedef Kabaş, who was detained and faced a possible prison sentence of up to five years on charges of targeting individuals on her critical tweets. I was pleased to learn that Kabaş was acquitted of defamation charges and resisting arrest in May.

I noted the police raids against the daily newspaper Cumhuriyet on 14 January and the summoning of two of its columnists, Ceyda Karan and Hikmet Cetinkaya, by an Istanbul prosecutor for inciting hatred and insulting religious values through the media.

I also raised the issue of court decisions to block websites featuring the post-attack cover of French satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo. The decisions were based on the argument that the cartoon had the potential to endanger public order. Several media outlets have reportedly received threats, including death threats, for insulting people's beliefs. I emphasized that I did not question the potentially offensive nature of some of the published media content;

however, the extension of freedom of expression to ideas that offend, shock or disturb remains an essential element of democratic debates and an international standard defined by the European Court of Human Rights almost four decades ago.

On **25 March** I wrote to Minister Çavuşoğlu, once again raising concerns with the omnibus bill mentioned above, which was passed by Parliament on 19 March. I repeated that if the bill became law it would provide justification for the blocking of entire websites without judicial review and possibly impose high fines on service providers and lead to the loss of licences.

I repeatedly emphasized that granting power to the executive powers to remove or block online content without a court order could severely interfere with freedom of expression online, and it can put the Internet at the risk of political control. I also noted that such a provision would run against the spirit of a 2 October ruling of the Constitutional Court, which found a similar provision unconstitutional.

I reiterated the readiness of my Office to assist Turkey in bringing its laws in line with related OSCE commitments.

On **14 April** I wrote to the authorities about the case of photojournalist Andy Spyra, who was refused entry into Turkey. On 28 March the journalist of Der Spiegel magazine was stopped by the authorities at Istanbul Ataturk Airport, detained overnight and denied entry the next day. The authorities accused him of carrying military style equipment. Spyra said that he identified himself as a journalist and that his equipment consisted of a dust blower for his camera and khaki-coloured clothing. I noted that his deportation seemed to be a disproportionate measure and asked for further details from the authorities.

On 27 May I received a reply from the authorities informing me that the relevant risk analysis team at Istanbul Ataturk Airport refused entry to Spyra, saying that he intended to join ongoing terrorist activities in Syria and Iraq. The letter also stated that Spyra did not produce documentation identifying him as a journalist.

Turkmenistan

On **23 December** I wrote to the authorities about a journalist working for Radio Azatlyk who had been taken to a police station for questioning.

On 13 December Soltan Achilova, who was photographing people queuing to purchase fresh meat that was available at subsidized prices, was approached by four people in civilian clothes identifying themselves as police and taken to a district station for questioning. She apparently was asked questions about her children and husband. Her camera was temporarily taken from her and the pictures were deleted.

Similar incidents with journalists from Radio Azatlyk were reported two weeks earlier.

I trust that the authorities will grant journalists the right to freely report on all issues of public interest and swiftly investigate all cases of intimidation.

On **29 December** I wrote to Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov about the death of Gulshen Ashirova, a journalist based in Ashgabat, who was reportedly killed in her apartment.

Ashirova worked for foreign and national media outlets, including the BBC, the Associated Press and Delovaya Nedelya.

I noted reports on investigations by the authorities in the course of which a 16-year-old was arrested; however the details of the incident remain unknown. I requested more information on this case.

On **27 April** I wrote to Foreign Minister Meredov regarding reports about authorities ordering the removal of privately owned satellite dishes from buildings in Ashgabat and other cities, citing aesthetic considerations and the availability of an alternative cable package offered by a state-controlled provider.

I said that satellite dishes are an important means to access a wide range of national and international sources of information and that aesthetics should not serve as a reason to restrict media freedom and pluralism.

I noted that this was not the first time I received information about the forcible removal of dishes from rooftops and facades.

On **9 January** I issued a public statement acknowledging a new law that could allow for more Internet access but also noted the restrictions in the measure.

“On legal regulation of the Internet development and Internet services in Turkmenistan” was adopted in December 2014. I commended the explicit objective to provide unrestricted Internet access to users. It states that access to Internet becomes obligatory for all scholarly, educational and cultural institutions, including schools, museums and archives. It also requires government offices to establish official websites providing basic information about their operations and that they have to respond to online inquiries.

The law, however, comes with restrictive regulations, including disproportionate limitations on online content with broadly defined activities, such as making users liable for the truthfulness of all information posted by them and for imprecisely defined terms including propaganda of violence and cruelty.

I said that these vaguely defined restrictions can have a negative effect on free flow of information and free expression on the Internet.

Ukraine

On **28 November** I wrote to the authorities sharing concern regarding reports that Evgenii Frolenko, a journalist with the newspaper Limanskaya Storona and contributor to the Nash Liman information web portal, was abducted by armed men in eastern Ukraine on 8 November. All his equipment was seized.

On 2 December I learned that Frolenko is being held captive by the state security service in Poltava on suspicion of establishing a terrorist group.

On **1 December** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Pavlo Klimkin conveying my sorrow over the deaths of journalist Alexander Kuchinskiy and his wife on 29 November in

Slovyanskiy District, Donetsk Oblast. According to reports, both were stabbed. Kuchinskiy was the owner and the chief editor of the newspaper “Crime Express.”

I expressed hope that the perpetrators would be found and brought to justice soon.

On **17 December** I wrote to the authorities to express concern about several cases of attacks on journalists, their property and editorial offices around Ukraine.

On 10 December a group of armed men in uniforms attacked Alexander Gayduk, the editor of the news website Zerkalo Zaporozhya, in his house in Zaporozhye. He was beaten and then taken to the regional office of the Ukrainian Security Service, where he was interrogated for several hours.

On 16 December a man attacked Yevgeny Shramenko, the editor of the newspaper Shevchenkiv Krai, in his editorial office in Zvenigorodka (Cherkasy Oblast). Shramenko received serious injuries.

On 16 December a car belonging to Valery Shelepa, the editor of the periodical Berdichev Delovoy, was set afire in Berdichev (Zhitomir Oblast). The journalist alleges that the incident was related to his reporting.

On 11 December a car belonging to Stanislav Tugai, the editor of the news website Inforechye and the newspaper Nasha Magala, was burned in Izmail (Odesa Oblast).

On 26 November a group of people attacked the editorial office of the ICTV channel in Kyiv with Molotov cocktails causing damage to the premises.

On 22 and 28 November the editorial office of the newspaper Chas in Chernivtsy was robbed. Office equipment was stolen. The local branch of the Independent Media Trade Union expressed concern over failure of the police to carry out an effective investigation.

On 22 November Svitlana Galaur, a journalist with the state-owned newspaper Uryadovy Kurier, was physically threatened by people in Kharkiv. The journalist alleges that the threats were related to her investigative reporting.

I expressed hope that all cases will be swiftly and thoroughly investigated.

On 9 February I received a letter from the authorities providing information on above incidents, as well as on the progress of investigation on the death of Vesti daily journalist Vyacheslav Veremyi.

On **5 January** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Pavlo Klimkin to draw the attention of the Government to several new attacks on media in Ukraine.

On 3 January approximately 20 individuals wearing masks attacked the office of the Inter television channel in Kyiv with rocks. No staff members were injured, but the windows were shattered. This is not the first attack of such kind; on 28 April 2014 the same office was attacked by protesters who demanded that the channel stop broadcasting Russian programming. I raised the case with the authorities on 29 April 2014.

On 1 January the female crew of the Russian LifeNews television channel was attacked during a public march in Kyiv. As a result, the channel's camera was damaged.

I expressed concern that despite reported investigations into many attacks on journalists since the end of November 2013, no perpetrators have been tried.

On 20 March I received a response from the authorities informing that police have launched investigations both on the attacks on the office of the Inter television channel and the crew of the Russian LifeNews television channel. In the latter a suspect has been identified. I was also told that the LifeNews representatives worked in Ukraine with invalid journalist cards.

On **16 January** I wrote to the authorities to again express concern about the attacks on the media in Ukraine.

According to reports, on 10 January a group of masked individuals attacked the editorial office of the Slavyanka newspaper in Kharkiv using stones and smoke grenades. No staff members were injured, but the office was damaged.

On 10 January Konstantin Shtukalyuk, a journalist with Antena TV channel in Cherkasy, was attacked and beaten by three people who then fled the scene. The journalist received several injuries. He links the attack to his professional activities.

On **26 January** I issued a public statement condemning the raid by masked forces in Crimea on ATR television station in the city of Simferopol. They searched the premises, detained some staff members, confiscated equipment and shut down ATR's analogue broadcasting.

I said this practice of intruding on free and independent media cannot be tolerated in the OSCE region and said that the station should be allowed to resume broadcasts.

On **10 February** I wrote to the authorities regarding the case of a freelance journalist Ruslan Kotsaba who was arrested by the Security Service of Ukraine in Ivano-Frankivsk on 8 February on charges of high treason and espionage, reportedly for his views that are critical of the authorities. I asked the authorities to carefully review charges and take into consideration the journalist's right to free expression.

Further, I raised an incident involving Hromadske TV journalist Konstantin Reutskiy who was reportedly attacked and beaten by law enforcement officers at a road-police checkpoint in Pesochin, Kharkiv Oblast, on 29 January. According to reports, a camera belonging to the journalist was seized and later returned without a memory card.

I also noted for the authorities that recent draft legislative changes related to media regulation including legislation that would restrict the broadcast of certain audiovisual products, suspend broadcasts which include individuals who have been determined to threaten national security and ban commercials on certain foreign television channels. These provisions could thus lead to restrictions on free media and have negative implications for media pluralism and free flow of information.

I learned that on 3 June the court extended Kotsaba's detention until 3 August.

I learned that on 2 April and then on 3 June the authorities adopted the laws restricting the broadcast of certain audiovisual products produced in the Russian Federation and banning commercials on foreign television channels which have not ratified the European Convention on Transfrontier Television.

On **26 February** I issued a public statement expressing concern about the Supreme Rada's decision to strip accreditation from more than 100 Russian media outlets at all Ukrainian public institutions. I said these measures are excessive and lack transparency. I called on the authorities to fully disclose their reasoning for these steps and also provide a complete list of the media outlets affected.

Further, I noted that on 25 February law enforcement authorities detained, deported and banned from entering Ukraine for a period of five years the journalists with two Russian television channels, Channel One and NTV, for disseminating anti-Ukrainian propaganda. On the same day another journalist with NTV was denied entry to Ukraine. Earlier, on 16 February, a television crew with Al Jazeera was denied entry at Kyiv's airport.

On **1 March** I issued a public statement mourning the killing of Ukrainian photojournalist Sergei Nikolayev in eastern Ukraine, noting that his death shows the need for urgent efforts to ensure journalists' safety in conflict zones. I reiterated my call to all parties in the conflict in eastern Ukraine to ensure the safety of members of the media. I also repeated my call to the Ukrainian authorities to fully investigate the circumstances of all deadly attacks and violence against members of the media.

On **5 March**, one year after my assessment visit to Crimea, I issued a public statement to express concern about the continuous dismantling of free media and the crackdown on independent and critical voices on the peninsula. I called on those responsible to stop media censorship and to ensure journalists' safety.

On **13 March** I issued a public statement condemning the intimidation of independent journalists in Crimea following the detention today of Natalya Kokorina, a journalist and editor with the news portal Crimean Centre for Investigative Journalism.

Kokorina was detained by Federal Security Service agents who searched her parents' apartment in Simferopol. Kokorina was not allowed legal help during the search and detention nor given reasons for these restrictive measures.

FSB agents also searched the apartment of the parents of Anna Andriyevskaya, the former editor of the news portal, reportedly in relation to one of Andriyevskaya's articles published by the news portal. Her father's computer was seized.

On **19 March** I issued a public statement following a four-day visit to Ukraine and meetings with senior governmental officials, journalists and representatives of media associations from Crimea, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kyiv, Luhansk, and Odesa. During the meetings I discussed pressing media freedom issues, including journalists' safety; the need to put an end to impunity for attacks on journalists; the need to be cautious when introducing changes to media legislation with a view of proportionality for any restrictions; the importance of a well-functioning public service broadcaster; and full transparency of authorities' decisions that restrict foreign media, including accreditation requirements.

During the visit I also participated in an executive master class in broadcasting regulation, jointly organized by my Office and the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine, and met with journalism students at an OSCE Café event in Kyiv.

(See Visits and participation in events)

On **1 April** I issued a public statement to warn of further restrictions to media pluralism and access to information in Crimea, following the end of the imposed re-registration period for all media outlets by 1 April 2015.

Practically all Crimean Tatar media outlets, including ATR and Lale television channels, Meydan and Lider radio stations, QHA news agency, Avdet newspaper and others, have been forced to cease their activities due to the repeated denial by the *de facto* regulatory authorities to register them under the Russian media legislation. New procedural violations have been repeatedly cited as the reasons for rejection in some of the cases.

I said that people belonging to certain national cultures in their lands have the right to disseminate, access and exchange information at all times, including in their own languages. These developments are yet more proof of the politically selective censorship of free and independent voices in Crimea.

On **7 April** I issued a public statement to welcome new legislation to foster the development of public broadcasting, following the president's signing of a bill, which defines the legal status of and the basis for the creation of public broadcasting, establishes supervisory and editorial councils and introduces changes to the system of funding.

I urged the authorities to do their utmost to support implementation of the law.

Following the discussions held during my March visit to Ukraine, on **7 April** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Klimkin and provided the authorities with a set of recommendations on the issue of accreditation of media in the OSCE region.

On **13 April** I wrote to the authorities in connection with several incidents involving members of the media.

On 12 April two journalists were reportedly injured when their vehicle came under fire near the village of Peski in the Donetsk region. No information about the journalists or their affiliation is available.

In the beginning of April, Right Sector activists reportedly seized a large press run of the newspaper Vesti in at least two different locations in Kyiv. The driver of one of the delivery vans was attacked and threatened.

On 6 April Alexander Kopnov, deputy director of the TASS Information Agency, was reportedly denied entry to Ukraine without explanation.

Maria Varfolomeyeva, a contributor to various Ukrainian media outlets, has been allegedly captured and held by separatist forces in the Luhansk region since 9 January. Reportedly, the Security Service of Ukraine is investigating the case.

On **15 April** I wrote to President Poroshenko and issued a public statement on **18 May** following the adoption of the law “On condemnation of the Communist and Nazi totalitarian regimes in Ukraine and banning of propaganda of their symbols” on 15 May. The law criminalizes public denial of the activities of these regimes and bans all related symbols, except for restricted educational or scientific purposes. Violation of the law carries a penalty of potential termination of activities of media and prison sentences for 5 years to 10 years. The law was later enforced despite various calls to safeguard freedom of expression and media freedom.

On 15 May the authorities also adopted the law “On the legal status and honoring of fighters for Ukrainian independence in the twentieth century” which introduces liability for publicly expressing disrespect for certain groups of fighters for Ukrainian independence in the 20th century and criminalizes public denial of the legitimacy of their fight for Ukraine’s independence.

With full respect to the often sensitive and painful nature of historical debate, I said that broadly and vaguely defined language that restricts individuals from expressing views on past events and people, could easily lead to suppression of political, provocative and critical speech, especially in the media. Contested information and potentially problematic speech should not be banned; on the contrary, it should be addressed through an open debate.

On **16 April** I issued a public statement condemning the murder of Oles Buzina, a Ukrainian journalist, writer and former editor of the newspaper Segodnya. Buzina was shot and killed by assailants close to his home in Kyiv. He was known for his critical views. I called on the authorities to immediately and fully investigate his killing, and to allocate all necessary resources to investigate all attacks on journalists.

I also noted with regret the reported killing of journalist Sergei Sukhobok, co-founder of several online news portals and contributor to several Ukrainian media outlets, on 13 April in Kyiv.

On 5 May I learned that Yelizaveta Bohutskaia, a blogger and contributor to various media outlets, including Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Crimean desk, who now lives in Kyiv, has been summoned by the Federal Security Service for questioning in Crimea. I raised her case on 9 September 2014.

On **15 May** I issued a public statement welcoming the adoption of amendments to Criminal Code which increase penalties for crimes committed against journalists and their close relatives. The amendments include sanctions for threats of murder and violence; deliberate attacks; deliberate destruction or damage to property; murder or attempted murder; and abduction and detention.

I again called on the authorities to take all steps to fully investigate the circumstances of all crimes committed against members of the media.

In addition, amendments have been made to the law on state support of mass media and social protection of journalists, which enhance support to journalists or their families if a member of the media is killed or injured on the job.

I also noted cases involving journalists of television channels 112 and ZIK, whose work was obstructed in Zhitomir and the suburbs of Kyiv. The journalist with 112 was attacked by a member of the city council, while the ZIK's crew was attacked by men that seized its recording equipment.

United Kingdom

I received a letter dated 12 January from the Rt. Hon. Baroness Anelay of St Johns, Minister of State, discussing the Charlie Hebdo incident in France and the important work of the Office of the Representative does to ensure media freedom and the safety of journalists.

On **20 January** I filed official Comments in response to solicitations on the Regulation of Investigatory Power Act (RIPA) with the government relating to acquisition and disclosure of communications data. In summary, I indicated that except in cases where it is critical to the national interest, information subject to privilege and confidentiality cannot be obtained in the absence of judicial oversight.

On **28 January** I wrote to Rt. Hon. Baroness Anelay of St Johns, Minister of State, about amendments to RIPA and indicated my Office's position that governments should safeguard the right of journalists to protect their confidential sources. I also said that the right of sources to remain confidential in the United Kingdom should be maintained and only in rare cases should law enforcement officials have the right to intrude and then only with judicial oversight.

On **7 May** I issued a public statement expressing concern about an attack on politico.eu journalist Ben Judah in Bradford. He was punched, threatened and subjected to anti-Semitic abuse. I called for a prompt investigation of the incident.

United States

On **15 January** I issued a public statement declaring that the decision not to call New York Times reporter James Risen as a witness at the trial of a government official was a victory for investigative journalism and the protection of confidential sources. Risen, who said he would refuse to testify at the trial of Jeffrey Sterling, an official of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, who is charged with disclosing government secrets, faced jail time if he chose not to answer prosecutors' questions.

I said it was time for the United States to introduce federal legislation to shield journalists from testifying about confidential sources at trials. My earlier statements on the Risen case are available at www.osce.org/fom/104429, www.osce.org/fom/103842 and www.osce.org/fom/102051.

On **27 February** I issued a public statement welcoming new rules adopted by the Federal Communications Commission (commonly referred to as net neutrality rules) that reclassify Internet service providers as telecommunications services and will not be allowed to block access to legal content, applications, services or devices, impair or degrade lawful Internet traffic and create "fast lanes" by prioritizing specific content and services. In June 2014 I submitted a legal analysis on net neutrality rules prepared by Dawn Carla Nunziato, a law professor at The George Washington University Law School, in support of net neutrality. The legal review is available at www.osce.org/fom/119822.

Uzbekistan

On **13 February** I issued a public statement welcoming the release of journalist Hairullo Khamidov and called on the authorities to free all detained journalists, including Solijon Abdurakhmonov and Dilmurod Saiid, who are still in jail.

Khamidov who had been in prison since 2010, was the host of a popular radio show on religious issues before he was detained in January 2010 and, along with 18 others, convicted for being members of an extremist group.

I said that journalists must be able to do their jobs freely and that laws designed to fight extremism should not be used to stifle unpopular views.

On 16 March I received a response regarding the two journalists. I was disappointed to learn that the authorities believe there are no grounds to review their sentences or release them from jail.

Communiqués and other documents issued

On **8 January** in the wake of the deadly attack on the staff of the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris, I issued a Communiqué on freedom of expression and freedom of the media as a vital condition for tolerance and nondiscrimination. I set forth conclusions from a conference on freedom of expression for tolerance and nondiscrimination organized by my Office in December.

Conclusions and recommendations:

- Freedom of expression and freedom of the media are vital for the promotion of tolerance and nondiscrimination.
- Participating States should continue to improve the safety of journalists and ensure that freedoms prevail.
- Participating States should fully investigate all attacks and prosecute the perpetrators and masterminds to the full extent of the law. There must be no impunity for attacks on journalists.
- Participating States should refrain from banning any form of public discussion or critical speech, no matter what it refers to.
- Participating States must take all the possible measures in order to fight all forms of pressure, harassment or violence aimed at preventing opinions and ideas from being expressed and disseminated.
- Participating States should eliminate restrictions to freedom of expression on the exclusive grounds of hatred, intolerance or potential offensiveness. Legislation should only focus on speech which can be directly connected to violent actions, harassment or other forms of unacceptable behavior against communities or certain parts of society.
- Intolerance should primarily be dealt with in a discursive and therefore tolerant way. The role of civil society, media, international watchdogs and the effect of counter-intolerant speech must be particularly considered.

The document is available at <http://www.osce.org/fom/133611>.

On **5 February** I issued a Communiqué on the growing safety threat to female journalists online. I raised attention to the growing number of reports from across the OSCE region and beyond on oral attacks and threats against women journalists and bloggers in the online environment. I warned that a lack of awareness for the gravity of the issue may affect free speech and free media and urged participating States to take necessary steps to ensure basic conditions for free and independent media. Apart from requesting participating States to put the issue on the agenda immediately, I gave following recommendations:

- Strong public condemnation by political and public figures of online threats and intimidation of journalists is required for the public to recognize that this behaviour will not be tolerated. Priority to be given to improve the conduct of law enforcement agencies that should deal with online offences in the same way as with offline offenses, and to train police in better understanding and addressing online offenses.
- Existing criminal legislation should be implemented rather than establishing new laws that further restrict speech. The right to anonymity online should be preserved.
- Invest in media and Internet literacy to inform and improve citizens' capacities to contribute to a constructive media environment.
- Encourage more data and research and support non-governmental organisations that address the issue.

The document is available at <http://www.osce.org/fom/139186>.

Projects and activities since the last report

Activities with international organizations

EU trade secrets directive

On **30 March** I wrote Minister of Foreign Affairs Edgars Rinkēvičs in his capacity as the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union to convey my concerns about the proposed new EU trade secrets directive. I said the measure could result in restricting free media and free expression. I found it problematic that the text does not define the legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of expression and information and does not provide a clear definition of public interest in order to protect investigative journalism which involves trade secrets.

World Press Freedom Day Conference

On **2-4 May** my Office attended the World Press Freedom Day International Conference in Riga, co-hosted by UNESCO and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The focus of the program this year was on quality journalism, gender equality in media and safety for online journalists and their sources.

Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and Responses to Conflict Situations with international rapporteurs

On **4 May** three international freedom of expression rapporteurs from the United Nations, the Organization of American States and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights and I issued a Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and Responses to Conflict Situations. The declaration affirms the right of people to freely express themselves without fear of retribution by state and non-state actors and states that nations have an affirmative duty to protect people in their exercise of their free-expression rights even in situations of armed conflict or the threat of terrorism.

The declaration addresses the requirement that any restrictions on freedom of expression meet a three-part test under international human rights law, namely that it is provided for by law, it serves to protect a legitimate interest recognized under international law, and is necessary to protect that interest. It also states that untargeted or mass surveillance is inherently disproportionate and is a violation of the rights to privacy and freedom of expression.

The Joint Declaration is available at www.osce.org/fom/154846.

Eastern Partnership Media Conference

On **19-20 May** I delivered an opening statement and participated in the Eastern Partnership Media Conference in Riga, which was organized as a side event to the Eastern Partnership Summit. The aim of the conference was to discuss the role the media has in these countries, and to identify and discuss current challenges. In my statement I said that the future does not look promising as many of these countries commit wholesale violations of the right for people to engage in free media. EU has a major challenge in getting the countries still in denial of their media environments to move toward policies that will lead to EU accession.

UN Security Council Resolution on the safety of journalists

On **27 May** I spoke at a side event "Protection of journalists and media freedom - key to sustainable future" at the United Nations hosted by Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Linas Linkevičius and Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs Edgars Rinkēvičs and, on the same day, the UN Security Council passed unanimously Resolution 2222 on the protection of journalists condemning all violations and abuses committed against journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in situations of armed conflict. The Resolution, put forward by Lithuania, also called upon all parties in armed conflict to bring an end to such practices. The resolution is available at [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2222\(2015\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2222(2015)).

UNESCO Information Meeting

On **2 June** I participated in a UNESCO Informational meeting in **Paris** on the situation in Crimea, Ukraine, at the invitation of Director-General Irina Bokova, who had been tasked to follow up on the situation in Crimea and the city of Sevastopol in UNESCO's fields of competence. I focused on the situation surrounding free expression and free media.

Legal reviews

Belarus

On **17 February** I presented to the authorities a legal analysis of the draft law on amendments and additions to certain laws of the Republic of Belarus on issues of protection of children from information detrimental to their health and development.

The legal analysis was carried out by Dmitry Golovanov, a media law expert from the Russian Federation.

The analysis favourably notes the following provisions of the draft law:

- The objectives of the law comply with the international agreements and commitments of the Republic of Belarus;
- There is a balanced scope of information, which would be banned for distribution among children, is set forth and
- Media outlets will be allowed to independently classify information products.

However, the analysis also states that the draft contains provisions that would endanger the right to free expression and free media. The draft lacks key legal tools to ensure a balance between the right to protect children from detrimental information and the right to information. The draft law does not have well-developed mechanisms to classify information products, set up requirements for the expert examination of information products and determine public involvement in monitoring compliance with the legislation.

The expert believes that the draft law should be substantially revised to determination of rules, conditions and order for classification of information products, as well as setting clear mechanisms for expert examination of information products and ensuring public oversight of the law's implementation.

The analysis offers a number of other recommendations that would ensure compliance of the legislation with the OSCE media freedom commitments and international standards.

Mongolia

On **4 March** I presented to the authorities a legal review of the draft law “On Freedom of the Media” that was commissioned by my Office and was carried out by media law expert Eve Salomon from the United Kingdom.

The expert reviewed the August 2014 version of the draft law and considers it a substantial improvement over the existing law and the draft prepared in 2013.

For example, the draft law addresses a deficiency in the Constitution by guaranteeing the right to “impart” information as is required under the provisions of Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The expert also noted that provisions relating to the Media Council have become clearer.

However, several areas could be improved. The review recommends:

- To widen the scope of “journalists” and “media organisations” that the draft law covers. Provisions should also apply to media organisations that do not have contractual relationships with journalists in order to cover “citizen journalism” and bloggers, as well as community media organisations that are run by volunteers.
- To make it clear that the law only applies to those media organisations that are legally established in Mongolia to exclude its application to foreign-based media.
- To introduce a provision for a degree of regional representation in the Media Council, with at least one representative of each of the journalists and media organizations coming from the regions.

The legal review is available at www.osce.org/fom/165056.

Kazakhstan

On **7 April** my Office submitted a review on the “Concept of Interaction between Judges of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Mass Media” thus assisting the OSCE Programme Office in Astana in its efforts to support the Supreme Court to develop a public information policy.

The review by Sergey Chizhkov, a Senior Researcher at the Institute of Philosophy and Director of the NGO Guild of court reporters in Moscow, found a number of important ideas as well as some shortcomings. It recommended not considering media as a means of conveying information to the public from the judiciary but an independent and important institution of civil society, which has the mission to inform the public.

It also recommended to provide equal rights to all media, regardless of their participation or non-participation in joint information projects described in the Concept; to remove from the Concept the principle of "non-interference by the media in the administration of justice"; to avoid involving journalists in "image projects" and to not generally exempt court proceedings from transparency policies or to more clearly define the exceptions.

The legal review is available at: www.osce.org/fom/165011.

Moldova

On **16 April** I presented to the authorities a legal analysis commissioned by my Office regarding the amendments to the Audiovisual Code and the Law on Freedom of Expression. The legal analysis was prepared by Dr. Katrin Nyman-Metcalf, Professor and Head of the Chair of Law and Technology of Tallinn Law School at Tallinn University of Technology.

The analysis indicates that language used in the proposed amendments is vaguely defined and opens the possibility to broad interpretation. It also indicates there is a lack of clarity in the application and proportionality of sanctions.

The analysis contains the following main recommendations:

- The language of proposed legal amendments should be more precise to avoid the possibility of broad interpretation;
- The provisions regarding sanctions should be more clear and respect the principle of proportionality;
- The restrictions regarding certain programs must fall within narrowly prescribed categories and
- Propaganda should be countered with information, rather than content restrictions.

The analysis also recommends the elimination of the proposed amendment to the Law on Freedom of Expression to prevent dissemination of materials from anonymous authors stressing that the decision to publish anonymous materials should be an editorial decision and not a legal mandate.

Canada

On **8 May** I wrote to the authorities to present a legal analysis of Bill C-51, the Anti-terrorism Act, 2015.

The analysis was commissioned by my Office and carried out by an expert, attorney Toby Mendel, executive director of the Centre for Law and Democracy, based in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

The attached analysis indicates that, among other potential shortcomings, the legislation as drafted could seriously affect the right to free expression. In particular, two provisions are highlighted.

First, the bill creates the criminal offense of advocating or promoting terrorist offences. It would criminalize the act of communicating statements which knowingly advocate or promote the commission of terrorism offences in general and knowing that any of those offences will be committed or being reckless as to whether any of those offences may be committed as a result of such communication. Both of these elements of the offence are problematical from the perspective of freedom of expression.

The analysis states that it is well established under international law that there is an important difference between *mere advocacy or promotion* of something, regardless of its harmfulness, and *incitement* to a harmful result. It is precisely through requiring a very close nexus between a statement and the risk of harm before the statement may be prohibited – as is required by the term *incitement*. International law ensures an appropriate balance between protecting free speech and protecting against harm.

The proposed legislation does not require such a connection and, indeed, criminalizes the unclear concepts of advocating or promoting acts of terrorism or being reckless in recognizing they may be committed. Limits on the right to free expression should not be introduced into law when based on such vague notions.

Key recommendations:

- Proposed section 83.221 of the *Criminal Code* should be limited to *direct and intentional incitement* to commit terrorism offences;
- The definition of ‘terrorist propaganda’ in proposed section 83.222(8) of the *Criminal Code* should similarly be limited to material which incites others to commit terrorism offences and
- The standard for engaging the seizure or suppression measures in proposed sections 83.222 and 83.223 of the *Criminal Code* should be more stringent than mere ‘reasonable grounds’, for example by requiring there to be ‘substantial grounds’, and some risk of harm, such as a likelihood of incitement to terrorism, should be added.

The legal review is available at www.osce.org/fom/156261.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

On **29 May** I presented to the authorities a legal analysis of best practices regarding must-carry and must-offer rules for cable operators and broadcasters, commissioned by my Office and carried out by Jean-François Furnémont, former Chairman of the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities and Director General of the Supreme Audiovisual Council.

The review is available at www.osce.org/fom/66082.

Visits and participation in events

On **27-28 November** my Office participated in an international conference in **Madrid** on defamation laws in Spain and presented a paper entitled “International mechanisms for the protection of journalists.” The conference was organized by Access Info Europe, the Media Development Investment Fund and the International Press Institute.

On **29 November** I delivered a lecture on media freedom in the OSCE region to students of the Faculty of Political Science at the University of **Sarajevo**.

On **4-5 December** I participated with my Office at the Ministerial Council meeting in **Basel**.

On **9 December** I delivered an opening address and participated in the discussion “Freedom of expression on the Internet” in **Strasbourg** before the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

On **10 December** I delivered opening remarks and participated in an international conference in **Brussels** on human rights for Internet users organized by the Council of Europe.

On **10 December** the Director of my Office spoke on freedom of expression and media freedom at the second EU Human Rights Dialogue in **Vienna**. The event was organized by the Representation of the European Commission in Austria, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the European Parliament Information Office and the Delegation of the European Union to the International Organizations in Vienna.

On **11-12 December** my Office participated in an international conference in **Pristina** on the digital switchover organized by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo and moderated one of the panel

discussions at the conference focusing on media freedom, diversity, pluralism and public service broadcasting in the digital era.

On **11 December** at the invitation of the European External Action Service, my Office participated in the pilot conference “Media Environment in the Eastern Partnership Region: preparations for Riga conference” in **Brussels**. The event considered the media environment in the Eastern Partnership countries, including regulatory aspects and issues affecting an open and balanced debate.

On **15 December** I chaired a meeting in **Podgorica** of the working group on amendments to the Montenegro journalists' Code of Ethics. This meeting was a direct result of the meetings last year during my official visit on 2 July, the follow-up visit on 17 July and the meeting of media owners and editors in my Office on 14 October.

On **16 December** I addressed the Human Dimension Committee in **Vienna** for the second time in the year. I said that the main focus of the Office’s work in 2014 continued to be related to the safety of journalists, followed by the daily monitoring of media freedom and potential threats to free expression in all participating States. I also introduced the main aspects of our planned work for 2015, including Open Journalism.

On **17 December** my Office participated in the meeting “Civil Society – OSCE Dialogue in Ukraine” hosted by the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship and the OSCE Project co-ordinator in Ukraine in **Kyiv**. The meeting focused on strengthening co-operation between civil society and OSCE actors in Ukraine.

On **18 December** my Office hosted an expert meeting in **Vienna** on the relationship between freedom of expression and tolerance and nondiscrimination. I emphasized that the two values should not only co-exist, but they can also strengthen each other. Freedom of expression facilitates the dissemination and discussion of all kinds of beliefs, thoughts and creeds. Free speech and free media are therefore vital for the promotion of tolerance and nondiscrimination. I urged all OSCE participating States to ensure the protection of pluralistic discussions on all issues, including sensitive ones tackling cases of intolerance and discrimination, noting that when freedom of expression is protected and strengthened, tolerance and nondiscrimination increase in the society.

The event included international experts, academia, and government representatives to discuss, among other aspects, the consequences and social implications of intolerant speech in the media, and the best practices to deal with these issues. The keynote speech was delivered by Susan Benesch, Director of the "Dangerous Speech Project."

On **23 December** Minister of Culture and Information Ivan Tasovac visited my Office in Vienna to discuss recent media freedom developments in Serbia.

On **24 December** the Director of my Office moderated and participated in the annual roundtable devoted to the anniversary of the Russian Media Law at the Faculty of Journalism, Lomonosov **Moscow** State University.

On **11 January** I joined a unity rally held in Paris for victims of the attack on the editorial offices of the magazine Charlie Hebdo. I said the rally was a massive response to the attack

and it shows the strengths of democracy that people were united worldwide for free speech and free media.

On **14 January** I participated in a memorial service organized by Presseclub Concordia in **Vienna** to pay tribute to the victims of the attack on the editorial office of the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo.

On **20 January** I met with the management team of Klix.ba (a news portal in Bosnia and Herzegovina) in **Vienna** to discuss the recent police raid on their offices and attempts by law enforcement officials to identify journalists' sources.

On **23 January** the Director of my Office participated (via teleconference) in a presentation of a book on laws regulating hate speech in the OSCE participating States taking place in the Sakharov Centre in **Moscow**.

On **27 January** my Office participated in the side event at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe "Media Freedom: Extended Crackdown on Journalists in Azerbaijan" organized by International Media Support and Human Rights House Foundation in **Strasbourg**.

On **29-30 January** my Office participated in the final conference of the project "Strengthening Journalism in Europe: Tools, Networking, Training" in **Florence** which aims to enhance practical support mechanisms for journalists in Europe regarding threats, violations of editorial liberty and freedom of speech organized by the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom.

On **3 February** my Office chaired a meeting in **Podgorica** of the working group on the amendments to the Montenegro journalists' Code of Ethics to provide expertise on best practices and review all provisions of the Code in detail.

On **5 February** I spoke on pluralism in media as a guest lecturer at Webster University in **Vienna**.

On **11 February** Minister of Culture and Information Ivan Tasovac visited my Office in **Vienna** to discuss media freedom developments in Serbia.

On **27 February** I participated in the discussion "After Paris – The Freedom of the Media and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization" at a meeting of the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group in **Vienna**.

On **3-4 March** my Office participated in the conference *CONNECTing the Dots* in **Paris** which reviewed the findings and recommendations of an Internet study carried out by UNESCO on freedom of expression, access, privacy and ethics.

On **4 March** I spoke on free media and free expression issues as a guest lecturer for students of the master's program in human rights at the University of **Vienna**.

On **5-6 March** the Principal Adviser participated in a workshop organized by Central European University in **Budapest** on the role of social media and internet companies in responding to violent political extremism.

On **5-6 March** my Office participated in a meeting of the committee of experts on cross-border flow of Internet traffic and Internet freedom in **Strasbourg** organized by the Council of Europe.

On **9 March** I met with UN Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights Ivan Simonovic in New York City.

On **9 March** my Office spoke at a hearing before the Italian Committee on Internet rights and duties on the draft Declaration of Internet Rights in **Rome**.

On **March 9** I participated in a discussion in **New York City** on journalists' safety, particularly in an around Ukraine, organized by the organization Free Press. The event was moderated by Tim Karr, Senior Director of Strategy, Free Press.

9-10 March my Office attended the conference “Strengthening the European audiovisual media market – for the development of the European identity” in **Riga**, organized by the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The conference brought together more than 200 participants representing the industry, media regulators, media experts and other government officials. One of my staff members moderated the panel on how to ensure media plurality and values in a converged media market.

On **10 March** I participated in the conference “Justice For Free Expression in 2014, a review of global freedom of expression jurisprudence in 2014” and spoke at the debate “Are courts around the world reinventing online regulation?” in **New York City** and organized by Columbia University. The Director of my Office spoke on “Legal Attempts to Restrict Propaganda Broadcasts Related to the Crisis in and around Ukraine, 2014-2015.”

On **11 March** I gave a keynote address at a media symposium on the state of media in South East Europe in **New York City** organized by the Harriman Institute of Columbia University.

On **16-19 March** I visited Ukraine and held meetings with senior governmental officials, including Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin, Minister of Information Policy Yuriy Stets and the Head of Verkhovna Rada’s Committee on Freedom of Speech and Information Policy Viktoria Siumar. I also met with the Head of the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine Yuriy Artemenko and the Director General of the National Television Company Zurab Alasania.

In the discussions with the authorities, I again raised the need to put an end to impunity for attacks on journalists and to be cautious when introducing changes to media legislation. I also stressed the importance of a well-functioning public service broadcaster and full transparency of authorities’ decisions that restrict foreign media, including accreditation requirements.

I also met with journalists and representatives of media associations from Crimea, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kyiv, Luhansk and Odesa to discuss all media freedom issues, especially journalists’ safety.

During the visit I also participated in an executive master class in broadcasting regulation, jointly organized by my Office and the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine, and met with journalism students at an OSCE Café event in Kyiv.

On **17-18 March** my Office organized an executive master class in **Kyiv** on broadcast regulation, covering, among other topics, issues in the Ukrainian media, the role of the regulator in times of conflict and licensing matters.

On **20 March** my Office participated in a workshop in **Tirana** to highlight the benefits of the digital switchover process organized by the European Commission and the Albanian Ministry for Innovation and Public Administration.

On **23 March** my Office participated in a debate in **Milan** organized by the Italian Order of Journalists, the Italian Federation of the Press and the Lombardy Association of Journalists on Law No. 925 on defamation. The debate was prompted by the approval of the draft law by the Justice Commission of the Senate. My Office commissioned a legal analysis of the law and recommended changes, including decriminalization.

On **23 March** I attended a meeting between Turkey's High Council of Judges and Prosecutors and my Office. The discussion, initiated by the High Council and hosted by my Office in **Vienna**, provided an important opportunity to discuss in detail our work and the need to protect and strengthen international standards on freedom of expression and media freedom.

On **25 March** I participated in a seminar in **Belgrade** on security-related strategic communication and made a keynote speech on security and freedom of expression organized by George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies.

On **25-26 March** my Office participated in a regional workshop "Challenges to Transformation of Public Service Media in South Caucasus and Eastern Europe Countries" in **Tbilisi** to provide a platform for exchange of experiences and ideas and to discuss the challenges public service media in South Caucasus and Eastern Europe face.

On **26-27 March** I gave the opening speech at the Chairman-in-Office conference on the "Protection of safety and integrity of journalists in the OSCE region," in **Belgrade**. The event addressed the safety of journalists throughout the OSCE area. My Office has actively participated in both the preparations and the panels of the two-day conference, which was concluded with the summary of the panel discussions presented by the Director of my Office. Once again I emphasized the importance of placing safety of journalists high on the agenda of this year's chairmanship.

On **26-27 March** my Office participated in a regional conference on media self-regulation in **Belgrade** organized by the Council of Europe and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

On **26-27 March** I participated and spoke at the conference "Protection of Safety and Integrity of Journalists in the OSCE Region" organized by the Serbian OSCE Chairmanship in **Belgrade**.

On **1 April** I participated in a conference in **Brussels** that examined the importance of strong and independent public service broadcasters and the specific challenges faced by the media in EU enlargement countries organized by the European Broadcasting Union and the European Economic and Social Committee.

On **10 April** I gave the keynote address at the Austrian Journalist Days celebration Österreichische Journalismustage 2015 in **Vienna** on current dangers to media freedom and its implications for journalism and organized by Presseclub Concordia, Forum Journalismus und Medien Wien, Initiative Qualität im Journalismus.

On **15 April** Minister of Information Society Ivo Ivanovski visited my Office in **Vienna** to discuss latest media freedom related developments in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and to request an expert opinion by my Office on the best practices regarding must-carry and must-offer rules for cable operators and broadcasters.

On **16 April** my Office was invited to attend the meetings of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe with members of Hungary's media community, experts and NGOs to assess Hungarian legislation on mass media and discuss what provisions of the laws pose dangers for pluralistic media and free speech. A report on the issue is expected in June.

On **16-17 April** I participated in the Global Conference on Cyberspace in **The Hague** organized by the Government of The Netherlands as a panellist in a session on privacy addressing what stakeholders could do to ensure that people could benefit from technological advances while retaining control over their personal data.

On **20 April** the Director of my Office and I participated in the 2015 Milton Wolf Seminar in **Vienna** which examined the historical continuities and potential paradigm shifts in strategic communication surrounding foreign policy events organized by the Annenberg School for Communication, the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna and the American Austrian Foundation.

On **30 April** I received the Médaille Charlemagne 2015 award on behalf of the OSCE and my Office. Médaille Charlemagne is awarded to a European personality who has made an outstanding contribution in the field of media, to the process of European integration and the development of a European identity. The prize is supported and awarded by the association "Médaille Charlemagne pour les Médias Européens," of which the following institutions are members: City of Aachen, City of Maastricht, German-speaking Community of Belgium, Media Authority North Rhine-Westphalia (LfM), Film- und Medienstiftung NRW GmbH, Arte - the European culture channel, BBC World News, Deutsche Welle, EOS Entertainment GmbH, Euronews, Eurosport S.A., the newspaper publishers' association of North Rhine-Westphalia and the committee for awarding the International Charlemagne Prize of the City of Aachen. The association came into being in 2006 on the initiative of the Media Authority North Rhine-Westphalia and the City of Aachen.

On **2-4 May** my Office attended the World Press Freedom Day International Conference in **Riga**, co-hosted by UNESCO and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The focus of the program this year was on quality journalism, gender equality in media and safety for digital journalists and their sources.

On **4-5 May** I participated in the annual conference of the Freedom Online Coalition "Internet Policy Making – Best Practices for Promoting Online Freedom" in **Ulaanbaatar**.

On **7 May** my Office made a presentation on the challenges to freedom of expression and free media sparked by the crisis in and around Ukraine at an OSCE forum organized by NORDEM at the University of **Oslo**, with a special focus on propaganda and participating States' responses.

On **11-12 May** I participated in a high-level conference in **Tirana** on freedom of expression and freedom of the media organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During my visit I also met with senior official representatives of the government and representatives from civil society.

On **13-15 May** my Office participated as an observer in the 41st meeting of the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities in **Berne**. On this occasion, about 150 delegates from 50 regulatory authorities in more than 40 countries in Europe discussed issues related to media regulation and exchanged information and best practices on topics of common interest.

On **14-15 May** my Office participated in a conference on Internet freedom and security and the development of the Internet in the countries in Central Asia in **Almaty** organized by the OSCE Programme Office in Astana, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and NGO Media Net.

On **19-20 May** I delivered an opening statement and participated in the Eastern Partnership Media Conference in **Riga**, organized by the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which was a side event to the Eastern Partnership Summit. The goal of the conference was to discuss current challenges to media freedom in Eastern Partnership countries.

On **21-22 May** I spoke at a night owl session as part of OSCE Security Days organized by the OSCE Secretary General and ODIHR on how can media help prevent violent radicalization that leads to terrorism.

On **27 May** I participated in a panel discussion at the United Nations in **New York City** on journalists' safety, hosted by the Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Linas Linkevičius, and the Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Edgars Rinkēvičs. Later that day, the UN General Assembly voted to approve Resolution 2222 that condemns all violations and abuses committed against journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in conflict areas.

On **4 June** I spoke at the Press Emblem Campaign in **Geneva** on the media freedom situation in Ukraine and Lyudmila Zlobina, Executive Director of the Kyiv Information Press Center/Crimean Center for Investigative Reporting and I were awarded Press Emblem Campaign prizes. Zlobina for the dedication and courage of the non-governmental organization which actively defended freedom of the media in extremely difficult circumstances in Ukraine, especially in Crimea. I was honoured for my mediation role in the Ukrainian crisis and for the promotion of freedom of information and expression in the whole region.

On **11 June** my Office participated in a discussion in **Vienna** on the protection of sources and whistleblowers organized by the International Press Institute and the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

On **13-14 June** I gave a plenary address at the 8th annual CEECOM2015 Conference “The Digital Media Challenge” in **Zagreb**.

Training

Workshop on broadcasting regulation in Ukraine

On **17-18 March** my Office organized an executive master class in **Kyiv** on broadcasting regulation in times of conflict for the National Rada on Television and Radio Broadcasting of Ukraine. Approximately 15 professionals from National Rada learned about and discussed such topics as the types of speech causing concern in Ukraine, media disseminating content deemed problematic, differences in speech on various media platforms, dealing with propaganda, jurisdictional issues, codes of conduct and guidelines, licensing, raising awareness, collaboration and consultation with the media and stakeholders, and complaint enforcement and sanctions. Three experts on media regulation, Dieter Loraine and Douglas Griffin from Albany Associates, and Emir Povlakić from the Communications Regulatory Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina shared their experiences on international standards and best practices. They suggested specific steps to prevent and resolve conflicts.

Regional workshop on challenges to transformation of public service media

On **25-26 March** my Office co-organized with the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and the Georgian Public Broadcaster a regional workshop on establishing effective public service media organizations. The OSCE missions in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldova, the Council of Europe in Ukraine and the EU Delegation in Georgia also supported the event. More than 40 senior managers from EBU members in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine gathered in **Tbilisi** to discuss common challenges, share best practices and identify ways to cooperate on the path to establishing credible public service media organizations.

Conferences

Tolerance and Nondiscrimination Conference

On **18 December** my Office hosted an expert meeting in **Vienna** “Freedom of expression for tolerance and nondiscrimination” on the relationship between freedom of expression and tolerance and nondiscrimination. I emphasized that the two values should not only co-exist, but they can also strengthen each other. Freedom of expression facilitates the dissemination and discussion of all kinds of beliefs, thoughts and creeds. Free speech and free media are therefore vital for the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination. I urged all OSCE participating States to ensure the protection of pluralistic discussions on all issues, including sensitive ones tackling cases of intolerance and discrimination, noting that when freedom of expression is protected and strengthened, tolerance and nondiscrimination increase in the society.

The event included international experts, academia, and government representatives to discuss, among other aspects, the consequences and social implications of intolerant speech in the media, and the best practices to deal with these issues. The keynote speech was delivered by Susan Benesch, Director of the "Dangerous Speech Project."

Round-table discussions between Ukrainian and Russian media trade unions

On **11 December**, **25 February** and **23 April** my Office organized round-table discussions among 10 senior representatives of the Russian Union of Journalists, the Independent Media Trade Union of Ukraine and the National Union of the Journalists of Ukraine. Participants discussed ways to improve journalists' professional standards and safety in Ukraine. Topics also included common monitoring of journalists' rights violations, promotion of respect of ethical standards and the issue of propaganda in the media. My Office invited three speakers to give presentations on ethics and solidarity in journalism, professional and ethical standards, and journalists' solidarity and co-operation.

Representatives of the European Federation of Journalists, the International Federation of Journalists, the International Press Institute and Reporters without Borders also participated in the meetings.

As a result of each round-table discussion, representatives of the Russian and Ukrainian media trade unions adopted four documents:

a joint statement on journalists' safety, calling for the release of two journalists detained in eastern Ukraine (12 December 2014, available in English, Russian and Ukrainian at <http://www.osce.org/node/131646>);

an appeal to all parties to ensure journalists' safety and to investigate all cases of violence against members of the media, as well as to urge journalists not to participate in propaganda activities and to show solidarity with their colleagues (12 December 2014, available in English, Russian and Ukrainian at <http://www.osce.org/node/131636>);

a joint declaration calling on journalists to persist in exposing all killings and acts of violence against journalists, and to continue putting pressure on the authorities to fully investigate these crimes (25 February 2015, available in English, Russian and Ukrainian at <http://www.osce.org/ru/fom/142751>);

a joint statement condemning the ongoing attacks on journalists reporting from the conflict and the use of propaganda (23 April 2015, available in English and Russian at <http://www.osce.org/fom/153111>).

Conference on safety of journalists and reporting in times of conflict

On **15-16 June** my Office organized a regional conference on journalists' safety, media freedom and pluralism in times of conflict in Vienna for more than 400 participants. The event brought together experts to assist media and authorities in Ukraine as well as those throughout the OSCE region affected by the conflict to overcome the most prevalent and problematic issues. The conference will result in a set of recommendations on best practices and the development of practical tools on issues of conflict and war reporting, the safety of journalists, journalism ethics, propaganda and the information war, media regulation and confidence building among journalists from different parties to conflicts. Conference details are on the event's webpage at <http://www.osce.org/fom/151466>.

Planned activities for the next reporting period

Visits and participation in events

On **18 June** my Office will take part in the 2015 Eastern Europe Regional Meeting of OSCE Heads of Field Operations in **Kyiv**.

On **22-24 June** I will participate in the Deutsche Welle Global Media Forum 2015 in Bonn and take part in the plenary session “Foreign policy in 140 characters: How technology is redefining diplomacy.”

Conferences

Safety of women journalists online

My Office intends to hold an expert meeting in the fall in Vienna to raise awareness for the growing safety threat to women journalists online and to stimulate a debate among different stakeholders on ways to address the topic. The findings of the debates will flow into recommendations for OSCE participating States on how to enhance online safety without curbing freedom of expression or compromising the right to Internet anonymity.

Extra-budgetary donors

I would like to thank the governments of Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland for their contributions to make possible the conference “Journalists' Safety, Media Freedom and Pluralism in Times of Conflict” and the governments of Norway, Turkey and the United States for their contributions to the “Freedom of expression for tolerance and nondiscrimination” expert meeting.

I encourage all participating States to consider supporting my Office’s effort to provide classes and regional meetings to improve the media landscape.