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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANVAR AZIMOV,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

29 July 2010

**In response to the report by the OSCE Representative on
Freedom of the Media**

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome Ms. Dunja Mijatović, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, to this meeting. We thank her for her extremely detailed and informative report, which refers not only to recent instances of violation of freedom of speech in the OSCE area, but also – and this is extremely important – sets out her view of the problems that exist in this sphere as well as priorities for their resolution.

We have already noted on a number of occasions that the mandate of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media provides for his or her close co-operation with the participating States. There are many human rights organizations working in the area of freedom of expression and freedom of the media. These are also carefully following the situation in these areas, making the necessary statements and appealing to governments and national organizations. However, what makes the institution of the OSCE Representative unique is the fact that it is arguably the only intergovernmental structure designed to provide assistance to the participating States in implementing the commitments they have adopted and in improving the media's conditions of work.

We are struck by the fact that the principles proposed by Ms. Mijatović for the work of her office correspond to this understanding. The Representative's tasks must be namely to co-operate closely both with the State agencies of the OSCE countries and with the journalists' public associations and the media for a balanced and measured analysis of the situation, free from political considerations. The fact is that any words uttered by the Representative are interpreted as the collective opinion of the entire Organization, therefore her assertions, especially public ones, must be carefully worded and based exclusively on verified facts. This should be equally applicable to the resolution of the global problems confronting our Organization, for example ensuring freedom of speech in the face of the omnipresence of the Internet and the emergence of other new information technologies. The sheer scale of the challenges arising requires consolidated efforts on the part of our entire Organization, and they can scarcely be dealt with by its individual members or institutions. Joint approaches and principles must also be elaborated here.

In the report presented by Ms. Mijatović today we noted the specific examples of co-operation between her office and the OSCE participating States. We are referring primarily to legal expertise and assistance in the drafting of legislative acts. It is in fact as a result of discussions and round tables that the necessary effective decisions can be adopted. And it is here, once again, that the collective experience of our Organization is needed more than ever before. It is important in that connection that both non-governmental organizations and the State institutions of participating States involved in the drafting of legislative initiatives play a role in the preparation of recommendations.

The appearance of advanced technologies in communications and the creation of information fields make the media not only an instrument for public information but also one that has a major educational impact, providing channels for broad discussions and, to a significant degree, shaping public consciousness. The participation of the Office of the Representative in various forums designed to counter the spread of hate speech and all manner of phobias appears useful.

The question of journalistic ethics and professionalism on the part of representatives of the media community is taking on ever increasing importance. The topic of the design and creation of self-regulating mechanisms in the media is of great importance for the development of democratic processes in contemporary society. Projects carried out by Ms. Mijatović's office in this area are useful.

We agree with the Representative that an important area of her institution's work should remain the Internet, especially in the light of the intensified efforts to combat terrorism, pornography and intolerance, something that was also mentioned in the report. There must be a cautious and balanced approach to the resolution of problems. We cannot allow freedom of expression to be used to the detriment of individual citizens or society as a whole.

As for the specific public statements and written appeals addressed by the Representative to Russia and referred to in the report, they have been carefully studied and we have provided the relevant answers.

As is evident from the report, Ms. Mijatović has made active and productive use of the time that has elapsed since her appointment to the post of OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to achieve the goals that she had set herself. The list of events and meetings in which the distinguished Representative has participated is indeed impressive. All in all, we should like to wish Ms. Mijatović and her colleagues every success in their work, in which they can firmly count on our assistance and co-operation.

Thank you for your attention.