



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT BY NORWAY IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT BY THE OSCE
REPRESENTATIVE ON FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA, MS DUNJA MIJATOVIĆ**

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik

to the Permanent Council, Vienna

23 June 2011

Mr Chairperson,

Let me first join others in warmly welcoming Ms Dunja Mijatovic back to the Permanent Council. We are truly impressed by the quality of the work done by your office and by the commitment that you and your staff show in a field that is so important to all of us.

I am also pleased to say that I can fully subscribe to the remarks of substance of most of the previous speakers, notably those from the EU, USA, Switzerland, Ukraine, and even most of the statement of the Russian Federation.

Mr Chairperson,

Freedom of expression is a priority in Norway's human rights policy. Freedom of expression is essential for the realisation of other fundamental rights, like freedom of assembly and access to information. It is a cornerstone of democracy.

However, restrictions on freedom of expression and threats to journalists are still common in many countries, even in the OSCE area.

Censorship and control take a variety of forms, according to the various channels people use to express themselves.

New technologies provide new opportunities for expression, but offer little protection against violence, imprisonment and harassment.

Impunity for violence against journalists, restrictions on access to information, defamation suits, unlawful fining by the tax authorities and new, strict media laws continue to undermine freedom of expression.

The list of challenges also includes restrictions on radio broadcasts by foreign radio stations, withdrawal of broadcasting licenses, the closing down of newspapers, and constraints in connection with the so-called war on terror.

As shown by the many individual cases referred to by the European Union in their statement today, a statement to which we can fully subscribe, there is every reason to be concerned about the commitments on freedom of the Media not being sufficiently respected or implemented in a large number of participating States. Single cases and incidents involving journalists have been and will continue to be brought to the attention of the Permanent Council. Norway has participated in the follow-up of such initiatives and we will continue to be active in such cases. And we will also continue to support OSCE events on Freedom of the Media and on the safety of journalists.

Mr. Chairperson,

As mentioned in the written report by the Representative, Norway will, together with the Lithuanian chairmanship; sponsor the second training course for Internet journalists from both sides of the Dniester river. Admittedly, this is not a huge contribution on our part, but we deem it to be important for at least two reasons.

First, the promotion of sustainable Internet media is an important factor in creating an environment in which journalists will be respected and given appropriate room to work. The use of the new media as free media must not be questioned in the OSCE area.

Secondly, we are also firm believers in conducting cross-border activities that can bring people together and thus create networks, both professional and in the cyber world, as a bridge-building activity, also in the areas of the frozen conflicts.

Mr. Chairperson,

Just two weeks ago, the OSCE held a conference on the safety of journalists in the OSCE region in Vilnius. The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media focused on three areas:

- the role of governments in ensuring the safety of journalists
- contributions from civil society, including journalists and NGOs
- best practices in legislation, law enforcement and judicial instruments to ensure the safety of journalists

These are essential issues if we want to defend the right to freedom of the media and freedom of expression. Hopefully, the conference will be followed up by concrete action in all OSCE member countries in terms of legislative requirements, including guarantees for media freedom and the creation of media laws that properly respect freedom of expression. In this respect we are fully behind the priorities given by the Representative.

Dear Dunja Mijatovic, you and your competent and dedicated staff can continue to count on our full support for your tireless efforts in pursuit of your important mission.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson