



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE
REPRESENTATIVE ON THE FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 4 July 2019

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mme Chair,

I join others in welcoming the Representative on the Freedom of the Media (RFoM), Mr Harlem Désir, to the Permanent Council and thank him for his report.

The participating States have repeatedly reaffirmed that freedom of the press and media are among the basic prerequisites for truly democratic and civil societies. In 1997, we, the States, established the RFoM to support the implementation of our commitments to furthering free, independent, and pluralistic media. A crucial part of his mandate is to observe media developments in participating States in order to promote compliance with OSCE commitments. In this respect, he assumes an early-warning function.

Unfortunately, there has been much opportunity for warning. Since his last report to the Permanent Council, in November of last year, Mr. Désir has raised issues with 41 participating States in all parts of our region. While the RFoM and his office continue to fulfil their mandate with the highest integrity, we must realise that, in many cases, early warning has not been enough to promote or ensure compliance with OSCE commitments on media freedom. As the numerous interventions by the RFoM show,

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we are not only witnessing sporadic incidents of non-compliance, but systematic deterioration of the situation for media and journalists in several parts of our region. We remain concerned with the specific risks faced by female journalists and the gender specific turn that violence against journalists has taken in recent years.

Furthermore, Norway is concerned about widespread impunity for threats, attacks and killings of journalists and media workers. Every act of violence that goes uninvestigated or unpunished invites further violence. Norway calls upon all participating States to intensify efforts to eliminate and prosecute such crimes. The OSCE, with its broad mandates on democracy and rule of law, and strong field missions, can play an important role in this regard.

Mme Chair,

We must consider further measures to ensure that all participating States comply with our commitments. We must ask ourselves what more we can do to ensure compliance and continuing implementation. Participating States must answer that question not only with vague statements of intent, but with concrete measures and action.

Observation and interventions forms the backbone of the RFoM's mandate, but engaging directly with the media and other stakeholders to build understanding and support for free media is also important. Norway supported the South East Europe Media Conference that recently took place in Sarajevo. We are encouraged by the successful co-operation between the RFoM, OSCE missions, and the media itself in South-Eastern Europe. The RFoM will compile a set of recommendations for the conference to help shape the policies of the region to ensure media development and pluralism.

We must remember that the media can only do so much on its own to support media freedom. In the end, it is we, the states, that are responsible for ensuring a safe and enabling environment supportive of the freedom of expression and media freedom.

Norway takes its part of this responsibility. The freedom of the media remains one of our key priorities. We will continue to take action to secure media freedom both at home and in support of other participating States. To this end, we will use all tools at our disposal, not least the OSCE and its unbiased, watchful, and professional Representative on the Freedom of the Media.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to Director Frane Maroevic, for his committed service to the office of the RFoM and to the OSCE as a whole.

Thank you