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**STATEMENT BY MR. MAXIM BUYAKEVICH,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1245th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

31 October 2019

On the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists

Mr. Chairperson,

The International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, which is celebrated by the world community on 2 November, is a good occasion for drawing attention to the question of safeguarding conditions for the professional activity of journalists and of measures to protect them. We consider the decision adopted at the 2018 OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Milan on the safety of journalists to be an important guideline in this regard.

We are compelled to note that the situation in this regard remains very worrying. Unfortunately, our country is not immune either from isolated criminal cases in connection with media workers. We pay great attention to countering such crimes and do our utmost to punish the perpetrators. A vivid example of the improvement in the level of protection of members of the Russian journalistic community is the case of the journalist Ivan Golunov, who quickly had the unlawful criminal charges against him dropped as a result of the effective co-operation between State bodies, journalists' associations, human rights defenders and civil society.

Russia is systematically improving the relevant legislation and law enforcement practices. A procedure is being developed for compensating media workers whose life or health is impaired as a result of working in special conditions such as war zones.

In co-operation with the Union of Journalists, the Presidential Council of the Russian Federation for Civil Society and Human Rights has launched a mechanism for monitoring crimes against reporters. Incidentally, Kirill Vyshinsky, who languished in prison in Ukraine for more than a year on politically motivated charges, has joined this Council, where he will be responsible for the protection of journalists.

The general security situation of media workers in Ukraine remains particularly worrying. The recent change in the country's leadership has unfortunately not helped to improve the situation of media resources. Shelling of Russian journalists by the Ukrainian armed forces in the east of the country has continued. We are concerned at the attacks by the authorities on the television stations 112 Ukraine, NewsOne and ZIK, which have been critical of events taking place in the country. We are in agreement with the appeals to the

Ukrainian Government by international bodies, including the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Harlem Désir, to refrain from putting pressure on journalists and to guarantee their safety.

According to Serhiy Tomilenko, head of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, there have been at least 55 attacks on representatives of the press in Ukraine in the first nine months of this year alone. Moreover, the investigations of the crimes have not produced any results, which, in his words, is a sign of the “systematic impunity” of the perpetrators.

The full truth behind the murders in Ukraine of the journalists Anatoly Klyan, Anton Voloshin, Igor Kornelyuk, Andrey Stenin, Oles Buzina, Sergey Dolgov, Vyacheslav Veremiy, Pavel Sheremet and many others has yet to be established. In June the name of Vadim Komarov was added to this sad list. We hope that the Ukrainian authorities will carry out objective and thorough investigations of all these crimes and bring those responsible to justice. Finally, it is time to stop keeping “blacklists” of journalists and putting their lives in danger by disclosing personal details about them on the notorious Mirotvorets website.

Serious problems can also be found in a number of other OSCE States. In Georgia, for example, according to various reports, around 30 representatives of the media were injured during the mass disturbances in Tbilisi in June, including the producer of the video agency Ruptly, who was wounded by a rubber bullet. There has been an increase in attacks on members of the press during protests in several European Union countries. During the demonstrations by the “gilets jaunes” in France, for example, around 120 media workers were injured, and 54 of them were victims of police brutality. Among them were Victoria Ivanova, a journalist working for the Russian RIA Novosti, and Frédéric Aigouy, correspondent for the television station Russia Today France.

The conditions for physical violence against media workers are fostered to a large extent through the deliberate policy of stirring up an atmosphere of hostility and mistrust in connection with certain news resources. In this regard, the situation in a number of Western countries continues to give rise to particular concern.

In France, in addition to overt discrimination against Russian journalists by the authorities, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs continues to ignore requests by the Ruptly and Sputnik agencies for press cards, and journalists from the RT France television station have no possibility of attending events organized by the Elysée Palace or the foreign policy department. Russians are regularly subject to special checks when crossing the French border, even when travelling within the EU. This significantly increases the potential risks.

The situation with regard to freedom of the media in the United States of America cannot be described as satisfactory. Reporters Without Borders has noted an increase in illegal activities there with regard to journalists in 2019. Its report states that “the hostility towards journalists expressed by political leaders in many countries has incited increasingly serious and frequent acts of violence that have fuelled an unprecedented level of fear and danger for journalists”.

We urge participating States to take seriously OSCE commitments to ensure freedom of the media, equal access to information and the safety of journalists.

We shall continue to co-operate constructively with the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and UNESCO, whose mandate includes ensuring the safety of journalists, in all aspects of this important field.

Thank you for your attention.