



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
The Representative on Freedom of the Media
Dunja Mijatović

9 March 2017

Regular Report to the Permanent Council **for the period from 2 December 2016 to through 9 March 2017**

Introduction

Allow me to begin by applauding Hanna Herbst and Teresa Havlicek for their courage and conviction to compete in the public arena of ideas.

As you know, my Office pioneered a project on online safety of female journalists two years ago. It was timely and necessary and the testimony today proved that.

I will avoid the temptation, though it is great, to begin by making a grand assessment about the state of media freedom across the region.

I prefer to talk about the good work of this Office and the role of this Office – the role of the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the difference it makes in the lives of individuals and in the role it plays in shaping the media- and free-expression environment in nations and regions.

The reach and influence of the Office of the Representative goes beyond our letters and my public statements advising States on potential violations of media- and free-expression commitments.

For example:

Only last Friday, Special Rapporteurs from the United Nations, the Organization for American States and the African Commission decided to come here to Vienna at the OSCE to launch our latest Joint Declaration.

This year's declaration, "Freedom of Expression and Fake News, Disinformation and Propaganda" highlights the growth of disinformation and propaganda in traditional and social media, fuelled by both States and non-State actors and how it is designed and implemented to mislead people.

We concluded, among other things, that general prohibitions on the dissemination of information, based on vague ideas, including "false news" or "non-objective information," are incompatible with international standards on restrictions to freedom of expression and should be abolished.

Our joint declarations on matters of media importance have grown in stature over the years and are cited regularly by courts and other tribunals to explain and interpret free-expression principles. It shows the substantive importance of this Office in shaping the environment for free expression globally.

That is just one of the latest accomplishments this Office can point to. There are others, less firm and unable to be easily quantified. Standing up for free-speech advocates, the independent press and courageous individuals who dare to not follow the government line does not easily translate into success or failure.

This office has no court to issue decisions and no military or police force to enforce them. Its only power, as spelled out in the Mandate, is to convince, persuade, question, criticize, provide solutions and suggest compliance. Its greatest influence is to engage the States in a public debate over the exercise of free media and free expression – and to energize and mobilize the public to engage in debates over issues of immense importance.

The greatest asset of this Office is the credibility and trust that has been established over the last 20 years of working closely with journalists and the civil society throughout the OSCE region. This is also your achievement, as this year marks the 20th anniversary of the Permanent Council decision Number 193 by which you established the Mandate of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

Most importantly, on a daily basis we work with journalists – as has been shown in our continuing dialogue with Russian and Ukrainian journalists covering the conflict in and around Ukraine. And we have additionally started a new dialogue with prominent representatives of Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot journalists in an effort to assist in improving the underpinnings of good journalism – including the development of ethical standards and self-regulation mechanisms in Cyprus. These activities are about confidence building, reconciliation and conflict resolution, the very core of the OSCE’s comprehensive approach to security.

I am proud to say that the work of this Office has been internationally recognized.

While the awards may have been granted to me in some cases, all of them are in recognition of the good work of my staff and this Office as an institution and also in recognition of this organization, the OSCE, for its vision and role in defending the human rights in the exercise of comprehensive security.

Those awards include the Médaille Charlemagne in 2015 which recognizes a unique contribution within the field of media, to the process of European unification and the development of a European identity and the City of Geneva Press Emblem Campaign Award for work on the issue of the safety of journalists and media freedom in Ukraine during the crisis and the “exceptional commitment for the promotion of freedom of information in the whole region.”

Also included is the Dialogue of Cultures honor in 2015 awarded in Saint Petersburg by the Council of Mediacongress and the State Hermitage Museum in Russia.

And, of course, the Concordia Press Club prize here in Austria for work on press freedom issues.

And I could not be more proud of the Bronze Lion award at the 2014 Lions International Festival of Creativity given for the “Chronicles of Threats” campaign to raise awareness of dangers faced by journalists in Serbia. Overall, that campaign, done in conjunction with the Commission for the Investigation of Murders of Journalists in Serbia, won 10 international awards.

All of this brings us to today.

Indeed, the outlook for media freedom has been cloudy from the beginning of this organization, because, in many, many States, the notion of free media hangs by a thread with entire populations exploited by authorities that subject the media – and really anyone with a dissenting view – to economic ruin, harassment, physical abuse, prison or exile.

This cannot go on.

A day will come when there are no journalists in prison, when all attacks are quickly investigated and those who commit them are brought to justice. However we are not there yet!

The authority and effect this office has is not an illusion. It is set forth in the Mandate which you wrote and is my job to fulfill. It is your job to protect that Mandate and ensure that the Representative, whoever that might be, can work with complete assurance that he or she will be supported and backed by all the States.

The decision to support this Institution is in your hands. Civil society and media freedom organizations will be taking note of what happens after midnight on Friday when my mandate ends.

These past seven years have been an amazing journey filled with big challenges, big responsibilities, big rewards and big risks – to both my staff and me.

But I would like to express my gratitude for this incredible opportunity and for your support since, as you know, I’ve gone through the consensus process three times now and that shows your commitment to find solutions and ensure the continuation of this important and visible institution.

I would like to thank the Austrian chairmanship and all previous chairmanships and, personally, Secretary General Lamberto Zannier and his staff, who has provided assistance to this institution. Our successes are due to the co-operation that we have established with the Secretariat and other Institutions.

I also want to thank all Ambassadors and especially your human dimension officers for their hard work and co-operation with my Office.

And I’d like to thank my staff.

I hope that my successor will build on the foundation established by the first representative, Freimut Duve, and continued by Miklós Haraszti and me.

And I also hope that my successor will be a strong, independent and clear voice for free media and free expression across the entire OSCE region.

I want to close with a message to all journalists and members of the media.

Never give in; never give up. Eternal vigilance is the price of a free press.

Issues raised with participating States

Albania

On 8 March I condemned an attack on journalist Elvi Fundo, director of the news portal Citynews.al and Radio Best, who was beaten by unidentified assailants near a train station in Tirana. The journalist was hospitalized. I welcomed the condemnation of the attack by Prime Minister Edi Rama and the Union of Albanian Journalists and Audiovisual Media Authority, also noting that an investigation had been launched.

Azerbaijan

On **16 December** I wrote to the authorities expressing concern about several troubling developments involving members of the media.

On 22 November Afgan Sadigov, the editor of online news portal AzelTV, was sentenced to three months in pre-trial detention in Jalilabad city for assaulting a person who reportedly attacked him. Reportedly, Sadigov's arrest could be tied to his reporting, which includes raising human rights issues and criticizing local authorities. According to Sadigov's lawyer the court proceeding, which started on 1 December, revealed inconsistent evidence against the journalist.

On 25 November Ikram Rahimov, the editor of online news portal Realliq.info, was sentenced to a year in prison on libel charges. According to the journalist's lawyer, the lawsuit stemmed from a media article about evasion of taxes by a commercial entity in Sumgait city with a reference to the Ministry of Taxes. The article also reported about corruption of a local official in relation to the case. Reportedly, after being imprisoned for several days, Rahimov was tortured at the Sumgait police department in retaliation for his work.

On 28 November Zamin Gadji, a journalist with the newspaper Yeni Musavat, was summoned to Baku police headquarters over a Facebook post. In his post Gadji deplored the failure of authorities to solve several high-profile cases, including the murders of journalist Elmar Huseynov and writer Rafiq Tagi. Reportedly, the police accused him of "casting doubt on the country's social and political stability" and asked him to delete the post, which he refused to do.

I also noted reports that access to the websites of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Voice of America, as well as of the newspaper Azadliq and online media platform Meydan TV, has been intermittently blocked since the end of November by some internet service providers.

Sources alleged that the blocking could be linked to reports criticizing authorities, including the issue of increased gas and electricity tariffs.

I urged the authorities to give due attention to all the cases to ensure media representatives the right to free expression. I also reiterated my call to review the country's defamation laws in order to bring them in line with OSCE commitments and international principles on free media.

On 12 January I learned that Afgan Sadigov received a 2.5-year prison sentence.

On 13 January I received a reply from the authorities to my letter of 14 November 2016 regarding the cases of Fikret Faramazoglu and Faig Amirov (See Report to Permanent Council of 1 December 2016).

I was told that the preliminary investigation into Faramazoglu's case was concluded on 4 December 2016 and had been submitted to the Baku Court of Grave Crimes for consideration. The authorities denied the defence lawyer's statement that the journalist had been subjected to torture.

The authorities also said that they saw no point in elaborating on the case of Amirov in the context of my Mandate, as the charge brought against him is not related to media activity.

On **27 February** I wrote to Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov raising several cases of journalists and bloggers who have been recently arrested.

On 17 February Elchin Ismayilli, the editor of Kend.info news website and a contributor to the newspaper Azadliq and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Azerbaijani service, was arrested on charges of extortion and abuse of power in the Ismayilli district. According to Ismayilli's lawyer, the charges were indeed caused by the journalist's professional activity and critical reporting toward local authorities.

On 23 January Rovshan Mamedli, a freelance journalist, was detained and then placed under a 30-day of administrative arrest on charges of disobeying police in Baku. According to reports, Mamedli was raising human rights related issues in media and his arrest could be in retaliation for his journalism activity.

On 20 February blogger Rahim Shaliyev was reportedly detained and then placed under 30-days of administrative arrest on charges of hooliganism and disobeying police in Sumgayit. Reportedly, after being arrested, Shaliyev was tortured at a police station in retaliation for his critical posts on social networks.

On a separate note, I once again raised the situation regarding the newspaper Azadliq and the case of Faig Amirov, its financial director (See Report to Permanent Council of 1 December 2016).

I noted reports that in relation to Amirov's case, the prosecutor's office has been interrogating Azadliq's staff members and contributors. Reportedly, on 18-22 February, at least nine people, including Rovshan Gadzhibeyli, Azadliq's editor, have been questioned about the work of the newspaper, including its financing. I said that such treatment of

Azadliq's staff members and contributors by the authorities may produce a chilling effect on the work of the newspaper, and subsequently negatively affect the free flow of information and the citizens' right to seek and receive information.

I asked the authorities to pay due attention to all cases, so that right of journalists and bloggers to fulfil their professional activity and freely express views is fully respected.

On 1 March I learned that Ikram Rahimov, the editor of online news portal Realliq.info, was set free by an appeals court.

On **6 March** together with ODIHR Director Michael Georg Link, I issued a public statement condemning the sentencing of blogger and chair of the media NGO Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety Mehman Huseynov and called on authorities to release him.

On 3 March Huseynov was sentenced by a court in Baku to two years in prison on defamation charges. The case stems from Huseynov's detention by police on 9 January. Following the detention, the blogger claimed he had been subjected to torture. The chief of the district police then filed a suit based on Huseynov's claims, resulting in the charges. (See Report to Permanent Council of 27 November 2014).

On 7 March the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan issued a press release condemning the statement on Mehman Huseynov and accused the director of ODIHR and me of interfering with an ongoing legal proceeding.

Belarus

On **16 December** I wrote to the authorities conveying concern about the Investigative Committee's detention of Dmitriy Alimkin, Yurii Pavlovets and Sergey Shiptenko on 8-9 December 2016. Reportedly, they were held on criminal charges of "inciting racial, national or religious discord" for contributing to the Russian media websites Regnum.ru, Lenta.ru and Eadaily.com. I asked the authorities to carefully review all charges brought against them and fully respect their right to free expression in line with OSCE commitments and international standards.

I also asked for additional information about the case of blogger Alexander Lapshin, who was reportedly detained in Minsk on 15 December on an extradition request from Azerbaijan.

On **12 January** I wrote to Vladimir Makei, Minister of Foreign Affairs, regarding Lapshin.

Lapshin was detained in Minsk on 15 December and was facing extradition to Azerbaijan. According to reports, Lapshin was accused by Azerbaijani authorities of infringing the territorial integrity of the country and illegally crossing its border.

I learned that on 17 January the Prosecutor General's Office approved the extradition request.

On 27 January I received a reply from the authorities informing me that the decision on Lapshin's extradition was taken after a comprehensive analysis, was not politically motivated and the decision rested solely in the jurisdiction of criminal legal matters. I also was told that the authorities provided consular access to Lapshin for the representatives of the Embassies of Israel and Russia.

Lapshin's appeals to challenge the extradition in the Belarusian courts failed and on 7 February he was extradited to Azerbaijan.

On **6 February** I wrote to the authorities regarding the case of Vitaliy Sizov, a Ukrainian journalist with "Obshestvennoe TV Donbassa."

Reportedly, Sizov was forcefully detained by law enforcement representatives at a hotel in Minsk on 1 February. He was released after spending several hours at a police station.

Although the journalist was in the city in his professional capacity to cover a meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group and was in possession of valid accreditation issued by the Foreign Ministry, authorities requested that he leave the country within 24-hours. Sizov left Minsk on the same day. The reasoning for such a demand was unclear.

I told the authorities that the OSCE participating States have agreed to allow the entry of foreign journalists when the purpose is to engage in journalism activities and requested more information on the case.

On 13 February I received a reply from the authorities (in reply to the letter of 16 December) indicating that all three suspects prepared and placed on the homepages of news portals worldcrisis.ru, imperiyanews.ru, lenta.ru and eadaily.com.ru the articles containing elements of incitement to national and social hatred on the grounds of nationality and language. The charges were filed upon reports of the Information Ministry and the judgment of the expert commission.

On 6 March I received a reply from the authorities (in reply to the letter of 6 February) informing me that Sizov was included in the list of persons whose entry into Belarus is forbidden or undesirable, at the initiative of the Russian Federation.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

On **9 December** I wrote to Minister of Justice Josip Grubeša expressing my concern about a draft law on access to information and offering to provide a legal review of the measure.

On **30 January** I wrote again to Minister of Justice Grubeša presenting the legal analysis which was prepared by Sandra Bašić Hrvatina, a Professor and Head of the Media Studies Department of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Primorska, Slovenia. The analysis reviews critical provisions of the proposal to ensure that the law complies with the OSCE commitments and international standards.

(See Legal reviews)

Croatia

On **25 January** I wrote to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Davor Ivo Stier to note the positive actions by law enforcement authorities to investigate attacks and threats against journalists.

The perpetrator in the case of Ema Branica was sentenced to 10 months in prison by the Municipal Criminal Court in Zagreb for threatening her. I noted the decision of the Zlatar District Attorney's Office to issue an indictment against a person who was arrested for sending threatening messages to Saša Leković, president of Croatian Journalists' Association. I stated that I trust that the investigations into the other cases my Office has raised will continue.

I informed Foreign Minister Stier about the case of Jagoda Bastalić, a journalist working for Croatian Radio and Television who, according to media reports, also received threats and has reported them to the police.

Cyprus

On 24 November I received a reply in response to my public statement of 20 September condemning the setting fire of the car of Dina Kleanthous of the news site Reporter Online. In it, Andreas Mylonas, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, stated, *inter alia*, that the investigation into the incident was ongoing, the case was considered of high importance and that no other acts of violence had been perpetrated on media or their property in the last decade.

On **6 February** during my visit and following an exchange of views with journalists, media and human rights NGOs and media experts from both the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities, I issued a public statement on the role of journalists in furthering peace process.

On **8 March** I issued a public statement about a round-table discussion my Office held with prominent representatives of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot journalists. Participants identified the main challenges that journalists and bloggers currently face and discussed ways in which jointly agreed ethical standards could strengthen press freedom and improve the public's access to information. I expressed trust that several further meetings would take place in the near future with the goal of involving all stakeholders in the discussions on the role of quality journalism in informing the public. I said that my Office is ready to continue providing a platform for this process.

Denmark

On **7 February** I wrote Minister of Justice Søren Pape Poulsen to contribute to the public consultation about the draft law on website blocking. I expressed concern that the draft law fails to meet international obligations on freedom of expression, given its provision of very broad powers to block sites, the absence of procedural guarantees and the lack of safeguards for human rights, including freedom of expression.

Finland

On **5 December** I issued a public statement mourning the murder of two Finnish journalists in eastern Finland. During the evening of 3 December, two journalists and a politician were shot dead outside of a restaurant in the town of Imatra by a lone gunman. The two journalists were working for Uutisvuoksi's and Etelä-Saimaa's news rooms in Imatra. It is not clear if the murders had any connection to the journalists' professional activities.

France

On **3 February** I issued a public statement expressing concern at the case of television journalist Paul Larrouturou who was thrown out of a public event when he tried to pose a question to Front National presidential candidate, Marine Le Pen. I called on the French authorities to conduct an effective investigation of the incident as soon as possible and to hold accountable those responsible.

Georgia

On **3 March** I issued a public statement urging authorities to ensure media independence and pluralism in the wake of a Supreme Court decision ordering a change in ownership of the Rustavi 2 television channel. I previously addressed the issue on several occasions (See Report to Permanent Council of 26 November 2015).

I said the channel must continue to enjoy full independence to fulfil its professional activity in the public interest. I also noted concerns about the decision expressed by a number of political parties, civil society organizations and media.

Following a request from the authorities on **7 March** for my Office to assist Georgia in establishment of a new media Ombudsman, my office will engage a renowned international expert to provide an analysis that will be presented to Georgia.

Ireland

On **9 January** I wrote Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Charles Flanagan to highlight several issues regarding the Defamation Act 2009, which was undergoing review. I recommended in particular that the system of voluntary self-regulation should be strengthened and any award for damages should be reasonable. I endorsed the recommendations of the Sixth Report of the Constitutional Convention favouring the removal of the provision of blasphemy from the Constitution.

Italy

On **30 November** I received a reply from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation to my letter from September 2016 in which I had expressed concern about cases involving the safety of journalists and freedom of expression and called attention to the scores of incidents against media representatives that had occurred in Italy since January 2015.

The Ministry wrote that several of the cases I had listed had been reported to the police and some were under investigation and that journalists under threat are provided with the most appropriate protection measures. I was also promised information on cases of defamation in the coming months.

Kazakhstan

On 23 February I wrote to the authorities asking them to ensure personal safety of Zhanbolat Mamay, editor of "Sayasi Kalam Tribuna," who was detained on 10 February on charges of

assisted money laundering and remanded in custody for two month's pre-trial detention. Mamay was reportedly assaulted in detention.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

On 1 March I publicly condemned attacks on A1on news portal journalist Aleksandar Todevski and cameraman Vladimir Zhelchevski. They were beaten while covering protests outside the Parliament. I also noted that the previous day, crews from TV Telma and TV24 were verbally attacked by several people while filming the protests. I welcomed the quick reaction to the incidents by the authorities and their intention to bring the perpetrators to justice. I also noted that many political parties and journalists' associations as well as the Council of Media Ethics and the Agency for Audio and Audio-visual Media Services have condemned the incident.

Malta

On **15 February** I issued a public statement expressing concern over the case of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia. On 8 February in the context of a libel case brought by the Economy Minister a court upheld the Minister's request to freeze the bank account of Galizia for more than €7,000. I emphasized that initiating libel lawsuits for the work of journalists can very quickly chill free public discourse in any society, and the very unusual move to freeze significant financial assets of Galizia already depicted her as guilty. I added that public figures must endure a higher threshold of criticism and scrutiny due to their public work.

On 17 February I received a reply from the authorities about my statement and adding that such orders are very rare and agreeing that such precautionary acts may raise freedom of expression issues. The letter said there were ongoing legislative reforms in Malta, including the drafting a bill on media and defamation. An official copy of the bill was shared with my Office and the Government expressed a willingness to follow up with meetings on this subject.

On **21 February** I replied to the authorities welcoming that pre-judgment freezing of assets had been removed in the draft Media and Defamation Act and that the draft would decriminalize defamation, a step which all governments of OSCE participating States should undertake. I added that once debate begins in Parliament my Office would undertake a more detailed review of provisions relating to media freedom and free expression.

In the following days, Minister of Justice Owen Bonnici and I engaged in very positive and direct communications over the next steps of co-operation between my Office and the authorities. At the request of the Minister, my Office commissioned a review of the draft Media and Defamation Bill.

On **28 February** I sent the legal review to Minister Bonnici.

On **1 March** I issued a public statement commenting on the legal review, welcoming several provisions of the draft law, which, if adopted, would offer increased protection for journalistic work and pointed to certain elements in the draft law that need further improvement.

Montenegro

On **6 January** in a public statement I welcomed the release of journalist Jovo Martinović from pre-trial detention and called for the swift conclusion of his case. Martinović, a well-known investigative journalist, has been in custody since being detained on October 22, 2015. On April 8, 2016, the Special Prosecutor's Office filed an indictment against the journalist and 13 other suspects on charges of drug smuggling.

On **14 February** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Srđan Darmanović, Minister of Justice Zoran Pažin and President of the Parliament of Montenegro Ivan Brajović regarding amendments to the Criminal Code proposed by the Ministry of Justice which, if adopted, could adversely affect free media in Montenegro. I emphasized that the term “poruga” in Article 396a (1) should be clearly defined in order to ensure that the law would not allow for wide discretion and thus undermine media freedom. I also said that journalists and members of the media are not in a position to violate “the presumption of innocence.” The amendments should therefore ensure that the provision, contained in Article 396a (para 2), is not implemented in a way which threatens their right to freedom of expression.

On **9 March** I received a reply to my letter of 14 February from Foreign Minister Darmanović thanking me for my comments on the new amendments to the draft Criminal Code which could affect media freedom. In response the Minister clarified that the amendments are not intended to prohibit criticism but to protect the judiciary and State Prosecutor's Office.

Netherlands

On **2 December** I wrote to the Minister of Interior and to Parliament to express concerns regarding the draft Law on Intelligence and Security Services, in particular on the potential impact of this law on the confidentiality of sources of journalists. On December 9, the Minister answered, stating that the letter would be taken into account in the preparation of the dialogue between the Minister and Parliament. The Parliament also answered, on December 8, stating that the Standing Committee for the Interior had decided to consider the letter in the deliberations on the draft law.

On 8 December crime journalist and blogger Martin Kok was assassinated in Laren prompting me to issue a public statement on **9 December** condemning the killing and asking authorities to do their utmost to hold those responsible to account.

Romania

On **7 December** I received a reply from the Minister of Foreign Affairs to my letter of August 2016 in which I expressed concern and requested details about an investigation of British TV channel Sky News journalist Stuart Ramsey and his team, commissioned by the Directorate for Investigating Organized Crime and Terrorism after the broadcast of a television report on alleged arms trafficking produced in Romania by Sky News.

The Minister said that the Directorate was informed about rules applicable to journalists, the investigation was ongoing within the normal legal framework and the National Audio-Visual

Council of Romania asked its British counterpart institution, the Office of Communications, to assess the Sky News report.

Russian Federation

On **30 November** I replied to a letter from the authorities of 25 November in which they expressed concern regarding a European Parliament resolution on EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties and its possible negative implications on Russian media outlets.

On **23 December** I wrote to the authorities expressing my concern about several worrying developments involving members of the media.

On 20 December a court sentenced blogger Alexey Kungurov to 2.5 years in a penal colony settlement on charges of public justification of terrorism. According to reports, the prosecution followed the blogger's critical post. I urged the authorities to carefully review the charges against Kungurov on appeal so that his right to free expression would be fully respected. I also noted that this criminal case continues a troubling trend of persecution for expressing independent and differing views on social media platforms in Russia, which my Office has noted in recent years.

On 20 December Ivan Voronin, a journalist with Radio Svboda, was detained by police near the headquarters of the Federal Security Service in Moscow. Reportedly, he was in custody for several hours. Police did not file charges against him.

On 11 December David Frenkel, a freelance photojournalist contributing to Kommersant, was verbally assaulted and attacked by a protester while covering a public demonstration in Saint Petersburg. Frenkel sought law enforcement assistance but, instead, the police detained him and called medical personnel that forced the photojournalist to undergo an examination. I noted concerns expressed by the Russian Union of Journalists which considers the case as an obstruction of the journalist's activity.

I also raised the case of journalist Mikhail Afanasiev, editor of the Noviy Focus, an online media portal in the Republic of Khakassia. According to reports, he has been receiving death threats from representatives of local criminal circles for his reporting. Afanasiev has filed a complaint with police. I expressed hope that it would be given a due attention by the authorities and the journalist's safety would be fully ensured.

On 31 January I received a reply from the authorities regarding the cases of Kungurov and Frenkel.

On Kungurov's case I was told that the charges were based on evidence confirmed by the court.

On Frenkel's case I was told that the police detained the photographer because he provoked a conflict while covering a public demonstration. The police then called psychiatrists who used force because the photographer behaved aggressively. He was later set free without charges. It was also noted that upon Frenkel's statement, the police brought an administrative charge against one of the demonstration's participants.

On **28 December** I replied to the letter from the authorities of 20 December regarding developments in Ukraine, including the then draft law on the import of foreign publications (See Report to Permanent Council of 1 December 2016) and the incident at RIA Novosti news agency in Kyiv.

On 15 February I learned about reports that the Investigative Committee has suspended investigation of the attack on journalists, which took place at an administrative boundary of the Chechen and Ingush Republics on 9 March 2016, due to failure to identify suspects (See Regular Report of 10 March 2016).

Serbia

On **5 January** I publicly condemned an assault on Nihad Ibrahimkadić of the Anadolu Agency. Ibrahimkadić, a camera operator, sustained serious injuries and was hospitalized when he was attacked early on 5 January near a railway station in Belgrade.

Spain

On **5 December** I issued a public statement expressing my concern about a court ruling to stop the newspaper El Mundo from publishing a story on an investigation into the tax affairs of soccer professionals. I said that the right to privacy or illegal obtaining of information should not be used to block publication of information of public interest.

Tajikistan

On **5 December** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Sirodjidin Aslov asking to reinstate accreditation for six Tajikistan-based correspondents of RFE/RL, Mirzonabi Kholikzod, Mardonni Muhammad, Abdulloh Ashurov, Muhammadvafo Rakhmatov, Amriddin Olimov and Shodmoni Yatim.

On **6 December** I issued a public statement welcoming the quick decision by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to reinstate accreditation.

Turkey

On **19 January** I urged the authorities to intensify their efforts to find the masterminds behind the killing of prominent Armenian-Turkish journalist Hrant Dink. In a public statement, remembering the 10th anniversary of the murder, I noted the need for the authorities to ensure that justice is served and to provide closure for the friends and family after an agonizing decade of questions.

On 19 January 2007 Dink, the editor of the Armenian-Turkish bilingual Agos magazine, was shot dead in front of the weekly's Istanbul offices. Although his murderer was arrested and sentenced to more than 22 years in prison, the investigation into uncovering the masterminds of the crime remains open.

I emphasized that the authorities must reinforce the vital message to society that those who commit violence against journalists cannot do so with impunity.

On **1 March** I issued a public statement calling on Turkey to decriminalize journalistic work following the arrest of Die Welt journalist Deniz Yücel.

Fully recognizing the challenges and the terrorist threats that Turkey is facing, and once again condemning the attempted coup, I emphasized that it was time for the constant purge against critical voices to stop. I noted the continuing decline of the fundamental rights of freedom of expression and of media freedom in Turkey over the last several months and once again urged the authorities to reverse their approach toward critical voices without delay and release those in prison for their journalistic work.

I referred to outstanding journalists such as Ahmet Şık and Kadri Gürsel, imprisoned for months, adding that neither last year's coup attempt nor the existing security threats could justify silencing critical voices in the country.

I said that more than 100 journalists were imprisoned after the coup attempt in July 2016. I reiterated that more than 150 media outlets have been closed, more than 10,000 members of the media lost their jobs and thousands are currently awaiting trial for their critical tweets or other social media posts.

Turkmenistan

On **6 December** I issued a public statement calling on the authorities in Turkmenistan to release Radio Azatlyk journalist Khudayberdy Allashov, who was detained on charges of possession of illegal substance – chewing tobacco.

According to Radio Azatlyk reports, he was seen badly bruised and unable to hold his head or speak following the arrest.

I noted that Allashov's arrest followed several disturbing media freedom cases, including in October when Soltan Achilova, a Radio Azatlyk correspondent, was physically attacked and in November when threats were made to enforce a suspended jail sentence against another correspondent, Rovshen Yazmuhamedov.

On **22 February** I issued a public statement welcoming the release of Khudayberdy Allashov, a contributor to Azatlyk, the Turkmen Service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, who received a suspended sentence on charges of possessing chewing tobacco. On 6 December I had issued a public statement asking for his release.

Ukraine

On **5 December** I replied to a letter from the authorities of 29 November in which they raised safety issues involving media members in the Russian Federation.

On 8 December I learned that the Verkhovna Rada adopted amendments to the laws on print mass media and publishing and restricts access of foreign printed materials with “anti-Ukrainian content” to the Ukrainian market. Earlier, I expressed concern that the then draft had the potential to limit the free flow of information and might ban many foreign

publications (See Report to the Permanent Council of 1 December 2016). On 30 December the law was signed by the President.

On **24 January** following the Report of the Chief Monitor of the Special Monitoring Mission to the OSCE Permanent Council of 19 January, I issued a public statement condemning continued deterioration of media freedom and safety of journalists in conflict-affected areas not controlled by Ukrainian government.

In his report Chief Monitor Ertugrul Apakan highlighted several developments limiting freedom of expression and freedom of the media, including a ban of more than 350 websites and continued restricted access to Ukrainian print and broadcast media outlets. I noted that particularly worrying was the continued threats and intimidation of media members, as well as the arrests of bloggers Eduard Nedelyaev and Gennadiy Benitskiy by “LPR” members.

In addition, I expressed concern once again regarding the prosecution of Crimean journalist Nikolay Semena of the Krym-realii online media outlet. On 20 January Semena was indicted for “public calls for actions violating the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation.” The indictment follows the publication of an article expressing his views on the status of the peninsula. If convicted he faces up to five years in prison. I called for all charges against Semena to be dropped.

I also once again called on all those responsible for law and order in the areas not controlled by Ukrainian government to stop the destruction of freedom of the media and do their utmost to ensure the safety of journalists.

On **3 February** following the outbreak of hostilities in Donbas that led to several casualties of media members I issued a public statement calling for all sides in the conflict-affected area to increase their efforts to ensure the safety of journalists. I particularly noted the injuries inflicted on LIFE.ru cameraman Pavel Chuprin and British freelance photographer Christopher Nunn on 31 January and 2 February respectively.

Given the dangers of any armed conflict, I also urged journalists and media outlets to take all necessary precautions when reporting from conflict areas.

On **8 February** I wrote to Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin conveying my concern about the case of Strana.ua news website and its editor, Igor Guzhva, following reports that a number of journalists from Strana.ua, as well as some members of the media who contributed to Vesti.Reporter magazine, were interrogated by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU).

The interrogations were reportedly related to the criminal investigation into the Vesti.Reporter’s past publications which allegedly contained information that infringes upon Ukraine’s territorial integrity. I raised this issue when the SBU searched Vesti’s editorial office and confiscated equipment and journalists’ working materials (See Report to the Permanent Council of 27 November 2014). Reportedly, both media outlets have been targeted by the SBU because Vesti.Reporter was owned by Igor Guzhva, who is currently the owner and editor of Strana.ua.

The latest episode in the case involves journalist Inna Zolotukhina, former editor of Vesti.Reporter. On 27 January her apartment in Kharkiv and her mother’s house in Brovary

were searched by SBU representatives. Zolotukhina was forced to go to Kyiv where she was then interrogated.

Additionally, both Strana.ua and Igor Guzhva recently were accused by the “Mirotvorets” website of involvement in the attempted murder of the Member of Parliament Anton Herashenko because of several articles published.

I called on the authorities to refrain from any measures which could intimidate members of the media and impede the work of media outlets.

I also asked the authorities to prevent any possible violation of the law in the case of Radio Vesti, which was facing difficulties extending its two broadcast licenses.

According to reports, the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council was refusing to extend the licenses based on the allegation that the media outlet does not fully disclose information about its ownership structure and end beneficiaries. Radio Vesti denied these allegations.

On 14 February I issued a public statement condemning arson attacks on journalists’ property. On 12 February a car belonging to Sergei Guz, chief editor of the news website 5692.com.ua and the newspaper Gorod 5692, was set on fire in Kamianske in the Dnipropetrovsk oblast.

The journalist links the attack to his professional activity and critical reporting on local authorities by his media outlets. On 27 January and 10 February there were repeated attempts to set fire to TV studios used by music channels M1 and M2 in Kyiv. I also noted a similar arson attack which took place on 15 August 2016 in Dnipro on a car of journalist Kseniya Zaitseva.

On 25 February I learned that the President signed a decree enforcing the Information Security Doctrine. My Office commissioned a legal analysis of the draft Doctrine in July 2015 and offered recommendations based on international standards and the OSCE commitments (See Regular Report of 26 November 2015).

United Kingdom

On 10 January I issued a statement expressing concern about the commencement of section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013 which, if implemented, would mean that press defendants would be liable for all legal costs in libel and privacy cases, even if they win, unless they had already signed up to a recognized regulator. I indicated that the application of the provision could have a damaging impact upon the press, especially investigative journalism and local newspapers, which are already facing serious commercial challenges.

United States

On **2 December** I issued a public statement expressing concern over the questioning and search of a Canadian photojournalist at the U.S. border.

Edward Ou, who was on assignment for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to report on protests against the Dakota Access pipeline in North Dakota, had his phone and other mobile devices searched by U.S. customs officials when attempting to cross over into the United States. I said that government officials should not use border patrols to gather information in violation of a journalist's right to protect his work and confidential sources.

On **24 January** I issued a public statement calling on U.S. authorities to recognize legal protections for journalists while covering protests.

Two reporters, among others, were arrested in the morning of Inauguration Day and charged with "rioting or inciting to riot." Preliminary hearings were set for February.

I said that as long as it is not proved that journalists have taken a direct and active part in hostilities themselves, their activities during public demonstrations should be left unimpaired.

Uzbekistan

On **28 December** I received an answer from the authorities with comments concerning my letter of October 3 on recent amendments to the Criminal Code and the Administrative Code. In particular the authorities quoted provisions of the Law on principles and guarantees of freedom of information and on protection of journalists' professional activities, which prohibit publication of information on the private life of citizens without their consent.

On **29 December** I wrote to President Shavkat Mirziyoyev asking him to pardon several journalists that are serving prison sentences or committed to psychiatric clinics.

On **22 February** I issued a public statement welcoming the release of Muhammed Bekjanov, the former chief editor of the opposition newspaper Erk, who served 18 years in prison, and called on the authorities to release several journalists who are serving prison sentences or remain in psychiatric institutions.

On **1 March** I issued a public statement welcoming the release of Djamshid Karimov, a journalist from Djizak. Karimov had been confined almost continuously to a psychiatric institution in Samarkand since 2006. I again encouraged the authorities to release all journalists in prison.

Projects and activities since the last report

Table of murdered journalists

At the meeting of the Permanent Council on 1 December I announced my intention to send a letter to ambassadors of countries concerned listing information my Office has on the murder

of journalists in your participating state since 1992 and requesting that your authorities update the information with an eye toward publishing a comprehensive list this spring.

Letters were subsequently delivered to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Georgia, Greece Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Netherlands, Poland, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Spain, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Responses have been received from a number of participating States. I encourage all participating States to reply promptly so that the list provided will be up to date and accurately reflect the situation across the region.

Legal reviews

Comparative defamation study

On **7 March** I issued a comparative study “Defamation and Insult Laws in the OSCE Region” which points out that criminal defamation laws unduly limit media freedom. The study, conducted by experts and correspondents of the International Press Institute (IPI), is divided into two sections. The first section one offers conclusions according to each of the principal categories of criminal defamation researched with reference to international standards on free expression. The second provides the detailed research findings for each OSCE participating State, including relevant examples.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

On **30 January** I wrote to Minister of Justice Josip Grubeša to present a legal analysis of the draft law on access to information. The analysis was prepared by Sandra Bašić Hrvatinić, a Professor and Head of the Media Studies Department of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Primorska. The analysis reviews critical provisions of the proposal to ensure that the law complies with the OSCE commitments and international standards.

The main points of the analysis include the following:

- The law in its current form would seriously restrict freedom of expression and would reduce the current level of government transparency;
- The draft law is much more restrictive than the present legislation;
- The introduction of the principle of obligatory and proactive publication of information with the aim of improving the transparency of public authorities’ operation is welcome. However, the range of information to which this principle applies is very restricted and certain categories of information are ambiguously defined, opening ways for arbitrary interpretations in practice;
- The law also contains a long list of exceptions, information which public institutions are not obliged to publish or forward to the public due to reasons related to the protection of the legitimate interests of the state. However, these exceptions need to pass the test of the public interest, which has become an exception rather than a rule;

- There should be no need for an individual requesting access to information to state “the reason for requiring access to information.” The right to access public information is a fundamental right that may be exercised without justification;
- Supervision of the implementation of the law should be strengthened. The responsibility is transferred to the Administrative Inspectorate of the Ministry of Justice without defining what measures and actions should be taken by the supervising body to ensure the comprehensive implementation of the law.
- In addition, having one of the highest government bodies, the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the appellate body for all the complaint cases may not be the most appropriate solution.

Kazakhstan

On **7 March** I presented to the authorities a legal review on the Supreme Court on The Rules of Access for Visitors on the Premises of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Local Courts of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the Department of Court Maintenance at the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Staff of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan) and Its Local Departments by the by legal expert Sergei Chizhkov. The review analyzed the rules of access to courts, including journalists’ access to court, from the perspective of Kazakhstan’s compliance with the OSCE commitments on access to information.

Visits and participation in events

On **2 December** I participated in a seminar in **Stockholm** on “Defying Hate and Threats against Women Journalists” organized by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and several nongovernmental organizations.

On **6-7 December** my Office participated in the “Freedom of Media and Safety of Journalists in the Western Balkans” conference in **Belgrade**. The conference was organized by the Independent Association of Serbian Journalists as the part of the project “Regional Platform for Advocating Media Freedom and Journalists’ Safety.”

On **7 December** I spoke at the OSCE Civil Society Parallel Conference that took place at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Hamburg.

On **9-10 December** my Office participated in training for court reporters in Russia. The event took place in **Saint Petersburg** and was organized by the Legal Training Center.

On **15 December** my Office spoke in **Strasbourg** at the high-level seminar “Freedom of Expression – role and powers of National Human Rights Institutions and other national mechanisms,” co-organized by the Council of Europe and the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions.

On **15-16 December** my Office participated in an international seminar “Threats and opportunities for regional media in digital age: EU and Russian perspectives on the freedom of expression in the 21st century” and in the Memorial Day for Russian journalists murdered in the line of their professional activity. The meeting took place in **Moscow** and was organized by EU Delegation to the Russian Federation, in association with the European Federation of Journalists and the Russian Union of Journalists.

On **21-23 December** my Office held a lecture and participated as a judge in the first North-East Europe Regional Round of the Price Media Law Moot Court competition for student teams from Eastern Europe, the Baltics and the South Caucasus. The event took place in **Kyiv and** was organized by the Centre for Democracy and Rule of Law and Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.

On **13 January** my Office participated in the Regional Meetings of the Heads of OSCE Field Operations in **Vienna**.

On **27 January** I gave a keynote address at the **London** School of Economics conference “The Media Policies of Europe's "New Authoritarianism” on challenges to media freedom posed by authoritarian rulers.

On **1 February** my Office took part in a meeting in **Podgorica** about media self-regulation in Montenegro.

On **3 February** I attended the international conference “Safety of Journalists: An Imperative for Free Media, Freedom of Expression and Public Order” organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine together with the OSCE, as well as other international organizations and national media associations in **Kyiv**. During the visit, I met with Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin, as well as a number of other officials.

On **6 February** on invitation of the Embassy of Sweden in Cyprus, I delivered a keynote speech at the International seminar “Challenges to Press Freedom: the Global Landscape and the Case of Cyprus” in **Nicosia**. I also exchanged views with journalists, media and human rights NGOs and media experts from both the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities.

The seminar, which took place during my two-day visit to Cyprus on 5-7 February, was organized by the Cyprus office of the Peace Research Institute Oslo and sponsored by the governments of Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the European Parliament Office in Nicosia. It provided an important platform to emphasize the role of pluralistic, quality journalism.

On **13 February** my Office participated in the conference “Mass Media in Belarus - Challenges and Opportunities” organized by the Belarusian Association of Journalists and FOJO Media Institute (Sweden) in **Minsk**. The event covered a number of topics including media legislation, standards of journalism in the modern world and the economics of media production.

On **16 February** my Office took part in the Wilton Park (UK) conference “#Fake News: innocuous or intolerable?” organized by Wilton Park, the University of California, Irvine and Article 19.

On **14 February** my Office moderated a panel on the safety of female journalists in **Prishtinë/Priština** at the “Regional Conference on the Safety of Journalists in South Eastern Europe” organized by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo.

On **21-24 February** I visited Turkey where I met with Minister of Justice Bekir Bozdag, Deputy Chair of the National Assembly Human Rights Commission Fatma Benli and President of the Information Technologies and Communication Authority Omer Fatih Sayan. During the visit I made a request to visit a small number of imprisoned journalists.

On **24 February** and **3 March** my Office participated in discussions in **Zaporizhia** and **Odesa** organized by the National Union of the Journalists of Ukraine. The events focused on ways to improve journalists' professional standards and safety in the context of project "Two Countries – One Profession: A dialogue between journalists from Russia and Ukraine" supported by my Office since May 2014.

On **1 March** I travelled to Geneva following an invitation by the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström to jointly open the exhibition "Sweden's 250 years of freedom of the press" on the margins of the UN Human Rights Council meeting.

Conferences

On **12 December** my Office hosted a high-level conference on Access to Information. The event, which took place in **Vienna**, in honor of the 250th anniversary of the passage of the world's first freedom of information law, gathered some 100 participants to discuss the important milestones made by the international community in access to information policy and legislation and to highlight the crucial gaps that still remain in the practical implementation of open data and freedom of information commitments.

Participants from government institutions, media outlets, academia and international legal organizations compared experiences and best practices on successful implementation of access to information channels and the role it plays for openness and transparency in our societies. Additionally, nine teams of young journalists and activists selected by OSCE missions from several participating States presented the findings of a short-term study on access to information legislation in their respective countries.

More information about the event can be found here: <http://www.osce.org/fom/286131>

Round-table discussions between Ukrainian and Russian media trade unions

On **7 December** and **30 January** my Office organized the 12th and 13th round table discussions in **Vienna** and **Hamburg** respectively among four senior representatives of the Russian Union of Journalists and the National Union of the Journalists of Ukraine. Participants discussed the current state of affairs with safety of journalists in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea, cooperation on ethics and safety, and common projects and activities.

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

Public presentation of the Dialogue between journalism organizations of Ukraine and Russia

On **9 December** at the 23rd OSCE Ministerial Council in **Hamburg** and with participation from the German Chairmanship, my Office organized a side event to present the ongoing dialogue between journalists from Russia and Ukraine held under the auspices of my Office,

with a focus on the joint activities of young journalists from both countries. Speakers included senior representatives of the Ukrainian and Russian journalism organizations and young journalists from both countries who shared their experience and vision.

The event also included an exhibition of photos jointly taken by young journalists from Ukraine and Russia in Vienna and Sarajevo and the showing of the trailer of a documentary film about post-conflict reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina jointly produced by the young journalists.

Central Asia Media Conference

On **13-14 December** my Office held the 18th Central Asia Media Conference in **Vienna** for more than 60 participants representing media, government, civil society and academia from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, along with experts from Mongolia and Europe. The main topic of the conference was multi-faceted challenges to media freedom in Central Asia, with sessions on countering violent extremism and hate speech online, propaganda of hatred, digital broadcasting and the latest media freedom developments in the region.

Participants adopted a list of recommendations on issues directly related to the conference's agenda. The list is available in English and Russian at <http://www.osce.org/fom/295301>

High-level conference on Freedom of the Media in the Western Balkans

On **27 February** my Office co-organized a conference with the OSCE Austrian Chairmanship, "Freedom of the Media in the Western Balkans." The high-level event held in Vienna provided a forum for more than 200 participants to discuss issues related to the safety of journalists and media ethics and to showcase the activities of the OSCE, particularly its field operations, in the region.

Chairperson-in-Office Sebastian Kurz, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina Igor Crnadak and Andreas Ernst, correspondent from Neue Zürcher Zeitung delivered speeches at the opening session of the conference.

Government officials, journalists, academics and international experts shared initiatives from the region that have improved the media environment and increased the protection of journalists, the capacity of the judiciary and authorities to respond to threats to media freedom, strengthened public broadcasters and journalists unions and contributed to a pluralistic, independent and vibrant media community throughout the region.

More information about the conference is available at <http://www.osce.org/cio/300711>

On **3 March** I hosted an event to launch the Joint Declaration of International Mandate Holders on Freedom of Expression. The half-day event, which took place in **Vienna**, was attended by a number of high-level experts. I published the Joint Declaration, which focused on disinformation and propaganda (fake news), together with David Kaye, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Edison Lanza, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression of the Inter-

American Commission on Human Rights and Pansy Tlakula, Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa.

On **3 March** I spoke at a Human Dimension Committee meeting in Vienna on propaganda.

On **3 March** my Office participated in the DASICON 2017 conference Europe Under Pressure” at the Diplomatic Academy in **Vienna** on the panel “Shrinking Democratic Space.”

On **7 March** my Office hosted a meeting of the Cyprus Dialogue. Journalists associations from the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities attended the meeting. The discussion included establishing goals for co-operation between my Office and journalists in an effort to promote media freedom and free expression and improve quality journalism.

Planned activities for the next reporting period

Visits and participation in events

On **16 March** my Office will present a report on propaganda and freedom of the media for the faculty and students of the School of Journalism and Information of the University of **Warsaw**.

On **23 March** my Office will speak at a meeting of the Committee on Political Affairs of Euronest at the European Parliament in **Brussels** on its draft report on freedom and integrity of the media in the EU and the countries of the Eastern partnership, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

On **29-31 March** my Office will participate at Rights Con in **Brussels**. The event will focus on pressing issues at the intersection of tech, business, society and human rights. Participants will discuss opportunities and challenges of protecting the internet and defending and extending the digital rights of its users.

On **27 April** my Office will participate in the 2017 Ambassador Milton A. Wolf Media and Diplomacy Seminar: “The Marshall Plan and the Yearning for Transformative Visions.” The event in **Vienna** is organized by the American Austrian Foundation, the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna and the Austrian Marshall Foundation.

Conferences

On **10-11 May** my Office will organize the 14th South Caucasus Media Conference in **Tbilisi** on the topic of disinformation, propaganda and freedom of the media.

On **19-20 June** my office will host a conference “Peace, Journalism and Freedom of the Media” in **Vienna**. The event will look at the multi-faceted ways in which journalism can contribute to or help ease tensions during conflict. Experts, civil society members, government authorities, journalists and human rights advocates will gather to discuss innovative initiatives taking place throughout the OSCE region that have improved dialogue and access to information during conflict.

My Office will organize the 19th Central Asia Media Conference in **Uzbekistan** in the autumn.

Extra-budgetary donors

I would like to thank the governments of Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and the United States for their generous contributions during this reporting period. I encourage all participating States to consider supporting my Office's effort to provide expertise and regional meetings to improve the media landscape.