



## German Presidency of the Council of the European Union

### **659<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Permanent Council**

**29 March 2007**

### EU Statement in Response to the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr. Miklos Haraszti

The European Union welcomes Mr. Haraszti to the Permanent Council once again. We should like to congratulate him on the extension of his mandate for a further term and wish him continued success in his work.

The EU attaches great importance to the work of the Representative on Freedom of the Media. We are conscious that his remit extends throughout the entire OSCE area and welcome his attention to media freedom issues in the EU. A free and independent media is a fundamental condition for the existence of democratic society. We have noted the challenges to media freedom identified by the Representative and share many of the concerns which he expresses. We have registered our concern at the death of the distinguished Turkish journalist of Armenian origin, Hrant Dink, in an earlier statement to the Permanent Council.

The wide ranging report presented today covers developments in many participating states. The Member States of the European Union which are addressed by the Representative have taken careful note of his comments and will maintain close contact with his office.

The EU welcomes the positive news which the Representative brings us of developments in Armenia, Canada, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the United States, as well as from Kosovo. We also join the Representative in welcoming positive developments in the media environment in Kyrgyzstan as set out

in his statement of 27 March. However, we are concerned that in a number of countries media freedom remains fragile or has worsened.

The situation in Azerbaijan is of concern. The continued failure to resolve the murder of Elmar Huseynov has a chilling effect on journalism in that country. The fact that the Representative will participate in a conference in Baku in April can facilitate further necessary dialogue with the authorities in Azerbaijan.

The EU urges the Belarusian Government to provide the information on its draft media law sought by the Representative and hopes that they will draw on the expertise available from his office before finalising the law.

We share the concern of the Representative at the continued detention of the Uzbek journalist and human rights activist Umida Niyazova. We also share the Representative's concern about the criminal charges brought against former Deutsche Welle journalist Natalia Bushueva. Ms Bushueva is the first journalist to be charged with unlicensed activities since Uzbekistan adopted a new law last year that bans local journalists from working for foreign media without accreditation. We join the Representative's call on Uzbek authorities to provide information on these cases as a matter of urgency.

The EU is disappointed that the Government of Kazakhstan has failed to respond to enquiries made by the Representative in December about journalist Azamat Zhetpysbayev. We call upon Kazakhstan to respond as soon as possible.

The situation of journalists in the Russian Federation remains precarious. We would hope that full information on the deaths of Mr. Safronov and Ms. Politkovskaya can be provided to the Representative. That independent, investigative journalists operate in a climate of fear and uncertainty in any OSCE participating State, must be a matter of concern to all of us. President Putin, however, rightly stated that it is an obligation for the state to create a safe environment for journalists to work in.

We join the Representative in welcoming the unanimous passage by the United Nations Security Council of Resolution 1738 on Journalists in conflict Areas.

The EU thanks Mr. Haraszi for the additional reports presented today on Registration of Print Media in the OSCE Area and on his Assessment Visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina. We shall study them with interest. We have taken note of the

activities undertaken by the office and the programme of activities envisaged for the remainder of 2007. The EU considers the areas of internet governance and legal reviews of media legislation to be of great importance and welcomes the continuing work of the office on these subjects.

Finally, we note that the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting, which opens here in Vienna this afternoon, will provide an opportunity to consider many aspects of media freedom in greater depth. We look forward to Mr. Haraszti's contribution to that event and wish him well in his important tasks.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia, EFTA countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

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\* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.