



OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 23 September to 4 October 2013

Working session: Fundamental freedoms I, including:
Freedom of expression, free media and information, including best practices for protection of journalists

Warsaw, 25 September 2013

Statement by the Delegation of Switzerland

Switzerland is convinced that the right to freedom of expression and media is an essential component of any democratic society. This right, together with the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, are indispensable to the full enjoyment of other human rights norms.

Switzerland congratulates the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatovic and her team, for their remarkable work and tireless efforts to actively ensure and improve the freedom of media, and more particularly the protection of journalists. Switzerland will continue to fully support the Representative on Freedom of the Media as well as to contribute to her activities, such as the South Caucasus and Central Asia media conferences.

In view of its upcoming Chairmanship, Switzerland intends to further strengthen the dialogue with civil society. The role of civil society and of media in assisting participating States to ensure full respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law is crucial and has been reaffirmed by the Heads of States and Governments at the Astana Summit in 2010. We are convinced that active participation of representatives of the civil society in various OSCE events is necessary to

shed light and reflect on the implementation of commitments as well as to explore ways to address and improve the human rights situation in OSCE countries.

Mr. Chairperson,

Switzerland considers that the safety of journalists is an essential ingredient of effective democratic governance. The safety of journalists is a Swiss priority in this regard. It goes without saying that we actively support the discussion about the safety of journalists in the different international forum. A few months ago, we have organized an international conference together with our Austrian and Polish colleagues, here in Warsaw, on the "Safety of Journalists – Current Challenges", in parallel to this we also support European Endowment for Democracy and remain particularly supportive of the discussion in the Human Rights Council.

Regarding the question of freedom of expression in the so-called new media, we would like to reiterate that although “digital media freedom” confronts us with a number of complex issues and important dilemmas, we can build on a solid basis of international human rights law and on equally solid OSCE commitments. These hard and soft norms in the field of media freedom remain valid also in the digital age. There should be no difference in people’s rights and fundamental freedoms, between the online and the offline world. The same rules and principles, based on the rule of law, should be applied.

Let me conclude by pointing out that the implementation of the existing international standards, rules and regulations is paramount. The member States of the UN and the Council of Europe as well as OSCE participating States have to comply with the commitments and obligations they voluntarily signed up to.

Switzerland would like to formulate the following recommendations:

- We recommends to all OSCE participating States to respect the right of journalists to carry out their work under safe conditions, without fear of being harassed, threatened, attacked, beaten or killed.
- We call on all participating States to work closely with the relevant international organizations with the aim to contribute to a relevant policy development to advance media freedom.