

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

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 22 November 2018

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. 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 freedom of expression and the freedom of the media are cornerstones of democracy. We must safeguard and promote these freedoms tirelessly and constantly across our region. Since his report to the Permanent Council, in July this year, the RFoM has raised issues with 44 participating States. We have noted, and appreciate, that he is also monitoring Norway. His activities continue to demonstrate professional and watchful scrutiny.

The autonomy of the RFoM guaranteed by his mandate is essential to effective monitoring and interventions. The rise of disinformation and propaganda combined with persistent threats, violence, attacks, and other pressure against the media, demonstrate the increasing relevance of the mandate.

Interventions with participating States form the core, but is only part of the activities of the RFoM. The 20th Central Asian Media Conference took place in Astana only a few weeks ago and complements these efforts. We encourage participating States to study the conclusions from the conference closely, and work alongside journalists and editors to implement its recommendations.

States are responsible for ensuring a safe and enabling working environment for journalists and media workers. We must recognise that women in the media are particularly vulnerable to harassment and violence. The underrepresentation of women in the media sector is a persistent problem and a hindrance to media independence and

diversity. We look forward to the upcoming update of the *Handbook on Safety of Journalists*. It is an opportunity to further integrate a gender perspective and address the specific challenges faced by female journalists.

The freedom of expression, the freedom of the media and the safety of journalists are key priorities for Norway. We support the development of laws and institutions that safeguard the independence of the media, combat censorship and promote public access to information. Therefore, we strongly support the work of the Representative on the Freedom of the Media and thank him for his efforts.

Thank you