

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Warsaw, September 24, Session 1, Fundamental freedoms I

Statement of the Delegation of Armenia

As delivered by Mr. Vaheh Gevorgyan, Deputy Head of the Permanent Delegation of Armenia to the OSCE

Mr. Chairperson,

At the outset, we would like to thank Ms. Dunja Mijatovic, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, for her insightful presentation. Armenia values this OSCE mandate for its considerable contribution to the development of thematic issues, for providing expertise and assistance, as well as for addressing the particular cases which require the attention of the all OSCE community.

Armenia decriminalized libel and effectively coped with the new emerging issues such as the application of the administrative fines. The ruling of the Constitutional Court from November 15, 2011 created very important guidelines for the courts with regard to defining the appropriate level of administrative fines which would be fair and would not endanger the media pluralism. The ruling made excessive references to the emerging norms of the international law and practice and used the opinion of the influential international actors in the field including the Office of the OSCE representative on Freedom of the Media

The recent parliamentary elections were very important test for assessing the level of the freedom of media in Armenia. All reports of the international observers including international election observation mission underlined the high level of media pluralism and equal access to the media.

Apparently, the internet is increasing media pluralism in Armenia. The internet is not restricted in Armenia and perhaps this is our best practice that we can offer here. We do understand that some participating states may have different yet valid practices and we are open for any meaningful discussion here provided that the right to the access to the internet is human right and should be enjoyed elsewhere in the OSCE regardless of legal status of any territory.

Safety of journalists is important dimension of the freedom of expression. Unfortunately, the judicial and extrajudicial offences against journalists are not rare practices particularly in some OSCE participating states. Fear and impunity are often outcomes of the crime perpetuated against journalists particularly those who dared to open up an important discourse on the right to the truth and the reconciliation between peoples.

Here, we see clear link between security and the freedom of expression, since the reconciliation can happen only through communication which itself can take place in the societies enjoying freedom of expression.

Lastly, we would like to assure that the freedom of expression will remain priority in the human rights agenda of my Government.

Thank you.