



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE**

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STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE
REPRESENTATIVE ON THE FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA
Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 9 November 2017

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Chair,

I join others in welcoming Mr Harlem Désir to the Permanent Council and we thank him for his presentation.

Freedom of expression is the foundation on which all other democratic freedoms rest. Freedom of expression, and its derivative freedom of the media, must be safeguarded and promoted tirelessly, every day and in every country. Mr Désir reports that he has raised issues with 31 participating states in the preceding months. Along with several legal reviews, visits and conference participation, his activities show the wide scope of RFoM's work and indicate the professional, watchful scrutiny with which the Representative and his office continue to operate.

We continue to appreciate that the Representative is bringing the issue of harassment and threats against female journalists to our attention. Female journalists have increasingly been singled out and attacked on the Internet. As such, the Safety of Female Journalists Online remains an important initiative and we look forward to the upcoming workshop in Vienna. However, the latest tragic killing of a female journalist, this time in Malta, starkly demonstrate that threats against female journalists are a much larger issue stretching beyond the confines of online space.

As we welcomed the "Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and 'Fake News', disinformation and Propaganda" in March, we now welcome the follow-up of the principles of that declaration. Disinformation and propaganda are still used for political purposes to increase tension and distrust, and to undermine the credibility of the media. We must counter the threats of disinformation and propaganda not by censorship, but by facilitating pluralism of the media and providing correct information. We call on participating States to continue work with the Representative on the Freedom of the Media to safeguard and strengthen free and pluralistic media.

Freedom of expression, freedom of the media and the safety of journalists are key priorities for Norway. We hope to see strong decisions that further our commitments in these fields at the upcoming Ministerial Council in Vienna. Norway supports 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. His unbiased, cooperative and professional approach shows us that this support is well placed.

Thank you.