



**Delegation of Canada
Statement in Response to the Report
By the OSCE Representative on Freedom of Media
Permanent Council Meeting
December 16, 2004**

Mr. Chairman,

Canada warmly welcomes the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr. Haraszti, on the occasion of the presentation of his last regular report this year to the Permanent Council. We thank him for a comprehensive overview of achievements and challenges in the OSCE area on media freedom.

My delegation supports the Representative's efforts to limit the abuse of criminal provisions against libel and to encourage the development of national legislation on Access to Information. We welcome the Representative's active and sustained efforts in providing legal assistance to participating States in meeting international standards on these issues.

We note a number of significant recommendations contained in the report, ranging from individual investigations of murdered journalists, to comprehensive overhaul of legislation on Access to Information and Freedom of Expression. These specific recommendations are aimed at a broad spectrum of participating States. We urge that these be reviewed carefully with a view to early implementation.

Canada supports greater complementarity among all international human rights mechanisms. For that reason, we welcome the Joint Declaration on Access to Information issued recently by the Representative with the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression and the Media, and the OAS Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression. Access to information is a fundamental human right that must be protected through strong legislation throughout the OSCE area.

We are confident that the project, *Libel and Insult: a Matrix on Where We Stand and What We Would Like to Achieve*, will serve as a useful tool in legal analysis and in following progress. We also commend efforts to enhance cooperation with the Council of Europe in this area of common endeavour.

My delegation is pleased to receive *The Media Freedom Internet Cookbook*, just in time for the festive season. The recipes, in form of recommendations, should provide a stimulating framework for discussion and debate over the coming year in areas of

growing interest from balancing freedom of the internet, with legislation and jurisdiction, to education, hate speech and "bad content". We are delighted to see a chapter with a Canadian recipe included, based on the best practices of a Canadian NGO, the Media Awareness Network, focusing on the education of young people on the Internet. The Governments of the Netherlands and Germany are to be thanked for their support of this publication. We have taken note that the OSCE Secretariat itself is not immune from unintended measures which restrict internet access and hope that the discussions between the Secretary General and the Representative result in a situation in which the OSCE leads by example.

Canada commends the Representative for his valuable work in Kosovo, which in conjunction with OMiK and the Temporary Media Commissioner, helped initiate a range of reforms. It is significant that the media, including RTK, acknowledged their mistakes during the March events and have pledged to install safeguards to prevent similar situations. We look forward to the early implementation of the Press Code for Kosovo, as well as continued engagement in the relevant aspects of the Standards for Kosovo policy.

Finally, we urge the Belarusian authorities to facilitate the long overdue visit of the Representative to that country. We anticipate the Permanent Council will receive a report from Mr. Haraszti on Belarus in the not too distant future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.