

Delegation of Belarus

**STATEMENT BY
THE PERMANENT DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS
TO THE OSCE AT THE 956th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

13 June 2013

**Regarding the regular report by Ms. Dunja Mijatović,
OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media**

Mr. Chairperson,

We join in welcoming the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatović, and thank her for her interesting and detailed report on her activities.

We note the informative and generally balanced nature of the report. The issues identified in that document cover a broad spectrum of problems in many OSCE participating States.

The latest incident in the United States of America involving Associated Press has clearly shown that serious problems regarding freedom of the media also exist to the west of Vienna. It is encouraging that the Office of the Representative does not shy away from such issues and draws our Organization's attention to them. We support the principled position taken by the Representative as regards the need to give warning of alarming trends and incidents wherever they occur, regardless of the geopolitical factor.

For our part, we are committed to open and constructive co-operation with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. We have established good contacts with the Office of the Representative at the delegation level here in Vienna and at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and regular meetings between Ms. Mijatović and senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs take place on the margins of Ministerial Council meetings.

In addition to political dialogue, we regard as important and wholeheartedly support the practice of involving experts from Belarus in thematic events held by the Office of the Representative. For example, in October of last year Belarusian journalists were invited to the regional training seminar on online journalism organized by the Office of the Representative in Chişinău. Representatives from Belarus also participated actively in the OSCE conference on the Internet this February.

In early June, Ms. Mijatović paid a visit to Belarus, during which important meetings were organized with the Belarusian authorities and with representatives of the State media and of the independent journalistic community. In addition, the Office of the Representative organized what was in our view a useful and informative training seminar for journalists on the Internet.

The visit received a positive reception in Minsk. There was an important exchange of views. The problematic issues identified by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media are being studied most carefully.

We are ready to continue co-operation with the Office of the Representative and to discuss new forms of collaborative work in the interests of Belarus and the OSCE.

Against this positive backdrop, we cannot but draw the attention of our Western partners to the inadmissibility of continuing to impose visa sanctions on a number of Belarusian journalists. We urge that these decisions be reconsidered immediately, with due regard for the human rights approach, acknowledging in this way the commitments assumed regarding freedom of movement and freedom of the media. We are counting on the assistance of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in this matter.

In conclusion, we should like to wish Ms. Mijatović and her Office every success in their future endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.