



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
The Representative on Freedom of the Media
Miklós Haraszti**

Opening speech by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr. Miklós Haraszti, at the 2006 HDIM, Warsaw

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to be here today.

I would like to express my gratitude to the CIO for giving such a high visibility to media freedom issues this year.

I would like to start by thanking ODIHR for organizing this very important tri-partite meeting. Tri-partite because it brings together NGOs, international organizations and governments to discuss a very broad scope of human rights issues over the next two weeks.

For the media to be free, it needs to be democratized. This means that the custody of the media needs to be handed from the state to the civil society, and that the monopoly of the state over the media has to end.

In 2012 the transition to digital broadcasting in Europe will be completed, overcoming the scarce resource of broadcast frequencies. The new amount of channels for commercial and public service broadcasting will help to build media democracies.

Journalists should be able to do their duty without fear of reprisals. My office has been calling for the decriminalization of libel in the past, and will continue to do so in the future.

Keeping confidential governmental information secret is the responsibility of government officials; therefore journalists should not be liable for receiving and publishing secret government information. Access to information is essential to the journalistic task of informing the public.

My Office is currently compiling a database on Access to Information legislation in the OSCE region. I would therefore kindly remind the participating States to return the questionnaire distributed on this issue by my Office (FOM.GAL/4/06) at their earliest convenience.

The recent “cartoon controversy” has also compelled some states to call for more media regulation. However, only a free media can be a responsible media, therefore,

state regulation of the media should remain at a minimum and self-regulatory mechanisms are the preferred option.

The above mentioned issues will be discussed in depth in this afternoon Working Session 1, as well as the follow up from the SHDM on Freedom of the Media, which took place in Vienna on 13 and 14 July 2006.

My Office is holding a side event today during lunch break on “Self-Regulation in the OSCE Region”, in room 2. I hope to see you there.

Ladies and Gentlemen, my Office will continue to support participating States, publishers, journalists and NGOs as they are the builders of media democracy.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.