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## **Conference Services**

At the request of the OSCE Delegation of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the attached statement made at the 956<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Permanent Council on 13 June 2013, is being distributed to all delegations.



**DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA TO THE OSCE**

**June 13, 2013**

**956th Meeting of the Permanent Council**

**Statement by Ambassador Zoran Dabik, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Macedonia to OSCE in response to RFoM Mijatovic**

Thank you Mr. Chair,

On behalf of my delegation, I would like to extend a warm welcome to RFoM Mijatovic and to commend her efforts to improve media freedom and freedom of expression in the OSCE area.

Madam Mijatovic, we welcome your regular report and we are thankful for your cooperation. Media appear to be one of the pillars of the modern democratic societies, thus we share a common objective and strive for establishment of a free environment for the media.

I would like to also thank the distinguished US Ambassador and EU representative for sharing their perceptions of the media state of affairs in the Republic of Macedonia.

Hereby, I would like to draw yours and the attention of the Council and shed some light on several of our undertakings in this area of great importance.

As you may be aware, in November last year the Republic of Macedonia adopted the Law on Civil Liability on Defamation and Libel. This news about the adoption of this Law, which decriminalizes defamation and libel, was positively received by many delegations in our organization, some branding us as an example in the OSCE area. Related to the implementation of this Law, I would like to inform you in the course of 2012 and 2013 several activities took place ranging from general and tailor-made training programs for judges, lawyers and journalists - to translation and publishing of the key Article 10 of the European Court of Human Rights related judgments. Moreover, a compilation of track record for both criminal (under the old law) and civil court cases and judgments was produced. A total of 525 cases of defamation and libel that were in criminal procedure in the courts before the decriminalization were stopped. There are 188 cases under the new Law.

On another significant piece of legislation, the mentioned draft Law on Media and Audio-Visual Media Services, I would like to make the Council aware that this Law - drafted by the Ministry for Information Society and Administration entered the public consultations process on 8 April. The draft was also published on the website of the Single electronic national registry of legislation (ENER) which also enables electronic submission of comments. Over 40 consultation meetings and hearings took place with the stakeholders so far. The Association of Journalists of Macedonia has been actively involved in the public consultations process. The government also sought and received expertise for the draft text of the law from the Council of Europe and OSCE/Office of the RFoM. All received comments were published on ENER for all contested parties to be able to view the received suggestions coming from different stakeholders. The recommendations and expertise received is used to improve the quality of the new law. Allow me to inform you that the public consultations on the improved draft continue and will be fed into the regular law adoption procedure.

I would like to also bring you up to date with the recent developments related to the Broadcasting Council. Namely, this important institution further improved its enforcement record as regards illegal concentration of ownership and conflicts of interest. It also adopted new guidelines on the promotion of pluralism and competition in the media market and on the non-selective imposition of sanctions, as well as a new Broadcasting Strategy 2012-17. Work is on-going to align national legislation with the Audio-visual Media Services Directive. All broadcasters are in compliance with 11 of the Broadcasting Law which prohibits owners and their family members to be holders of public functions.

Likewise, allow me to emphasize that the Government remains committed to continue the roundtable media dialogue with the Association of Journalists of Macedonia and other stakeholders within the Media Working Group and has undertaken activities and steps to facilitate the resumption of the group. In this regard, media dialogue has been pursued in different and more informal formats and settings with all media stakeholders, including the Association of Journalists of Macedonia. Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs and Minister for Information Society and Administration hold meetings with media representatives, also in the framework of the public consultation process on the new media law.

Last but of course not least, and related to case of Mr. Kezharovski - as this case is now in legal proceeding, I reserve the right to additionally return to it.

At the end, Mr. Chair, allow me to assure that we are firm on the course to further improve media environment in the Republic of Macedonia and looking forward to furthering our cooperation with Madam Mijatovic's office in good faith.