

Finnish Presidency of the Council of the European Union

**EU Statement at the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on  
Freedom of the Media: Protection of Journalists and Access to Information  
13-14 July 2006**

Mr. Chairman,

The European Union welcomes the convening of this Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on the Protection of Journalists and Access to Information, some five years after the first SHDM on Freedom of the Media in 2001. Much has changed since then.

We thank ODIHR and the Representative on Freedom of the Media for their work in organising the event and welcome the distinguished key note speaker and participants. In particular we welcome the presence of practitioners and commentators from our Partners for Cooperation. Other Member States will have contributions to make in all sessions so I shall confine myself to a few remarks on the theme of this session, Access to Information.

The European Union has always attached great importance to the free exercise of their profession by journalists and looks forward to fruitful and interesting discussions today. We attach great importance to the implementation of all OSCE commitments in the field of media freedom and the work of the Representative on Freedom of the Media. We are conscious that tension between perceived State interests and the legitimate exercise of journalistic freedom is present in all societies and for this reason we repeatedly welcome the fact that the Representative exercises his mandate throughout the OSCE area.

Heightened concerns about security in some participating States have brought questions of access to State information more into focus in recent years. While legislative provisions to safeguard sensitive information differ among our Member States, the European Union cannot accept that increased restrictions on access to, or the free exchange of, information contribute to a safer or more secure world. National security is very rarely compromised by revelations of corruption or official malfeasance; nor is sparing the embarrassment of Presidents, Ministers or officials a legitimate reason for restricting access to information. We look forward to hearing the views of experts and practitioners on this and related subjects and hope that discussion today will lead to the extension of best practises throughout the OSCE area.

We also look forward to the working sessions on voluntary professional standards and protection of journalists tomorrow. The positions of the EU on these important issues are well known and will be further elaborated in contributions from many Member States.

Thank you Mr. Chairman

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia <sup>1</sup> and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

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<sup>1</sup> Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process