

## **Working session 5, Safety of Journalists**

Mr. Chairperson,

On behalf of the informal OSCE Group of Friends on Safety of Journalists,<sup>1</sup> I would like to deliver the following remarks.

In December last year, all 57 participating states of the OSCE adopted a Ministerial Council decision on safety of journalists. We welcome its adoption, which was timely. Now it is time to focus on its implementation. We encourage journalists and other media actors as well as civil society representatives to study it carefully, use it and support its implementation.

The human right of freedom of expression, and the free flow of information, is under attack as journalists and other media actors across our region continue to be subjected to human rights violations and abuses, including killings, torture, enforced disappearance, arbitrary arrest, detention and expulsion, intimidation, harassment, and threats. Such attacks cannot and should not be tolerated. Free, diverse and independent media is a cornerstone of all democratic societies and is essential for our comprehensive security. Impunity for attacks on the free media cannot be accepted and more needs to be done to implement our shared commitments.

Earlier today, the informal Group of Friends on Safety of Journalists organised a side event focusing on how to build digital safety for journalism. The event served to underline key challenges related to the digital safety of journalists and other media actors and ways to address these.

All journalists face specific risks in the digital context. It is of critical importance that these are effectively addressed. Arbitrary or unlawful interference with journalists' use of the digital space, such as the use of encryption and anonymity technologies, must be stopped. Political leaders and public authorities must refrain from intimidating, threatening or condoning violence against journalists, also in the digital space. We must all unequivocally condemn any kind of violence against journalists, their sources and other human rights defenders.

Women journalists and media actors face a specific risk, particularly in digital contexts, and we strongly support that the OSCE Representative of the Freedom of the Media pays special attention to this issue. More has to be done to stop sexual harassment, abuse, intimidation, threats and violence, including through digital technologies towards women journalists and media actors.

We will remain committed to enhancing our efforts to ensure the safety of journalists and other media actors in the OSCE region and fight impunity. We encourage others to do likewise. We will stay engaged through the OSCE and its Representative on Freedom of the Media who has our full support. As clearly demonstrated today, the role of civil society is

---

<sup>1</sup> Composed of the following participating States: Austria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

unquestionable when it comes to defending democracy, freedom of expression and safety of journalists and media actors. You have our full support.