OSCE: Representative on Freedom of the Media - Report to OSCE Permanent Council

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On 15 November 2007, Miklós Haraszti, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, presented his regular report to the OSCE Permanent Council, the organization's main decision-making body. This was his third and final report of the year. Mr. Haraszti's presentation began with a commemoration of Alisher Saipov, "a young journalist whose promising career was cut short by an act of brutality". Saipov, a correspondent with the internationally acclaimed media outlets Ferghana, Radio Free Europe and Voice of America, and a founder of an Uzbek-language newspaper, was shot and killed in downtown Osh in the south of Kyrgyzstan. The Representative listed the activities of his Office since his last report and informed the Permanent Council of issues raised with 23 of the 56 OSCE participating States. They included such varied topics as violence against journalists, deprivation of their freedom for committing professional mistakes, revisions of media legislation and developments in media self-regulation systems. As is always the case, issues of broadcasting pluralism and independence in several countries also arose:

- Regarding Armenia, the media freedom representative wrote to the Chairman of the National Assembly and the Ministers of Justice and Foreign Affairs to voice his concerns about amendments to the country's broadcasting law, which could have potentially banned re-broadcasting of foreign public service programmes. In accordance with Mr. Haraszti's request, these amendments were not passed;

- In Azerbaijan, the Representative cited cooperation with the country's authorities on the question of regulation of Internet-based broadcast media;

- The Representative raised concerns regarding the suspension of two television stations during a time of political unrest in Georgia and reminded the Georgian authorities about the constitutional role of the media to inform society;

- To the President of Greece Karolos Papoulias, the media freedom representative wrote concerning the promulgation of a law which sets unnecessarily high requirements for obtaining a broadcasting license, rendering it difficult for, *inter alia* , community and low-cost broadcasters to go on air;

- The OSCE Representative voiced his concerns about the revocation of the re-broadcasting license from the Romanian public television channel TVR1, popular

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among Moldovan viewers, to the Foreign Minister of Moldova and the Chairman of the country's Audiovisual Coordination Council;

- Mr. Haraszti expressed his concerns to the Russian Government about the suspension of re-broadcasting of radio BBC on the Moscow FM station Bol'shoe Radio, the BBC's FM distribution partner station.

He also informed the Permanent Council of cooperation with other international organisations, including with the Council of Europe. In this case, such cooperation took the form of his Office's contribution to a conference entitled "Converging Media - Convergent Regulators" on the subject of digital broadcasting regulation, organized jointly by the CoE and the OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje. Finally, the Representative shed light on the annual joint declaration co-signed with his counterparts of the United Nations, the Organization of American States and the African Union. Broadcasting in the digital age was the topic of the 2007 declaration.

In accordance with his mandate, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media shall "address serious problems caused by, *inter alia* , obstruction of media activities and unfavourable working conditions for journalists" and shall "report to the Permanent Council on [the results of the Office's activities], and on his or her observations and recommendations". The next regular report to the OSCE Permanent Council by the Representative on Freedom of the Media is scheduled for 13 March 2008.

Report to the Permanent Council by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, 15 November 2007

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