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

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In her regular report to the OSCE Permanent Council on 21 June 2012 the themes highlighted by OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatović were Internet regulation and journalists' safety.

The report covers the period from 29 March to 21 June 2012.

"A global struggle for control of the Internet is under way," Mijatović told the council, which is the governing body of the organization. "There are competing views about rights, freedoms, security and regulations online. The discussions of freedoms and rights and the discussions around security often appear to be running on parallel tracks.

"We need to bring these debates and perspectives together and we need to encourage a more interdisciplinary understanding of cyberspace governance while enabling broad consultation. The OSCE offers a framework for the rights-security debate that we need to take advantage of," she said.

The Representative also updated the council on the many steps taken by international organizations to increase awareness of the dangers of practicing journalism in the OSCE region, which comprises 56 countries in North America, Europe and the former Soviet Union.

"These consciousness-raising efforts have resulted in quicker and more intense efforts by authorities across the region to hunt down and prosecute assailants," Mijatović said. "Success or failure of this movement cannot be judged in simple numbers - a decrease in violence does not, ipso facto, mean the environment is safer.

"The campaign to end the attacks will be long and hard and only joint and coordinated efforts engaging all stakeholders can bring success. My Office will continue to vigorously address issues of the safety of journalists for the benefit of our societies," she said.

Among other matters, the Representative:

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- Expressed concern over several incidents of the arbitrary detention and obstruction of activities of journalists in Belarus.

- Said she would continue to monitor developments regarding media legislation in Hungary and would be ready to assist authorities to bring the media package in line with OSCE commitments.

- Hoped that a Kyrgyz Parliamentary decision to block access to the fergana.ru website would be reversed.

- Said she was pleased that the Association of Journalists and the government of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had reached compromise on a ceiling on moral damages in libel cases, thus paving the way for future decriminalization of defamation.

- Hoped that the Minister of Justice of Poland would reconsider his position opposing repeal of criminal defamation.

- Welcomed a vote by the lower house of Parliament of Tajikistan on measures which would lead to the decriminalization of defamation.

Mijatović's office also provided a legal review to Spanish authorities on proposed access to information legislation.

The Representative's next report to the Permanent Council is scheduled for 29 November 2012.

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