



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
The Representative on Freedom of the Media
Dunja Mijatović**

27 November 2014

Regular Report to the Permanent Council for the period from 19 June through 26 November 2014

Introduction

I would like to start this morning by thanking the Swiss chairmanship, in particular Chairman-in-Office Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter and Chairman of the Permanent Council, Ambassador Thomas Greminger, and his staff for their support of my Office's work throughout the year and its generous financial assistance for our work in Ukraine in 2015.

I would also like to say I look forward to co-operating with the 2015 Chairman-in-office, Serbia.

Finally, I would also like to thank participating States that have contributed extra-budgetary funds this year to support the work of our Office and I hope we can once again rely on your support next year.

Perhaps this happens when you get older, but watching the events on television commemorating the 25th anniversary of the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, a wave of recent history roiled my memories.

I know that for many of you in this room, the Berlin Wall was a dividing line and a defining time in your personal lives and professional careers. Some of you had seen the Wall go up in 1961, a thick, gray and unforgiving structure; the perfect testament to the gray and unforgiving way of life that it sought to protect.

For 28 years the Wall stood as the one, true symbol of the dysfunction of Europe and the classic example of how logic and language could be turned on its head. Ironically, as we all know, it was claimed by the ones in control to be built for one purpose when the opposite was true.

It certainly seemed like the Wall would always be there.

Remember the world's surprise, and the utter joy and anticipation of family and friends and colleagues when, in early November 1989, it just went away? Those were the days. No more lies; no more Orwellian doublespeak. Freedom of movement, freedom of expression, free media. It was all there on the horizon.

Even from the earliest days, we all knew that fundamental rights such as free media and free expression were in our future – but they were “out there” on the horizon somewhere. Few of

us knew how far that horizon was from us. Was it a one-day trip or would it take longer, much longer?

This organization – our organization – the OSCE, was much younger then, just feeling its way about the fractured landscape of Europe, with newly free nations making more and more boastful promises about co-operation and of becoming free, liberal democracies where people could speak openly and without fear about the issues of the day.

By 1989 the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe had touched upon issues that would lead to advancing relationships among media across borders. And in 1991 in Moscow the participating States recognized that independent media was essential to free and open societies. They reaffirmed “the right to freedom of expression, including the right to communicate and the right of the media to collect, report and disseminate information, news and opinions.”

And they also agreed to “adopt, where appropriate, all feasible measures to protect journalists engaged in dangerous professional missions, particularly in cases of armed conflict, and will co-operate to that effect. These measures will include tracing missing journalists, ascertaining their fate, providing appropriate assistance and facilitating their return to their families.”

But this is not a history lesson; it is a retrospective on where the OSCE has been going for 40 years since the Helsinki Final Act.

The decade of the 1990’s was one of hearty optimism, at least on paper. The reality on the ground was often quite different.

In many States, the much-desired free media and free expression simply never materialized. That horizon turned out to be far, far away. And for those who made it their calling to bring free and independent media to their countries, the future was dim and dangerous.

Murder was the method of choice to silence independent media in some participating States; jailing was preferred by others. Many journalists were beaten. Others still simply disappeared. And so it goes today, 25 years after the collapse of the Wall and 15 years after the establishment of my Office.

Across the OSCE region independent media faces challenges on many fronts, including government institutions on the local, regional and national level that appear to be taking a concerted effort to return to the days before the Wall fell.

How can I be so sure of this, you might ask? You only need to look east to the conflict in Ukraine.

Since events began a year ago on the streets of Kyiv, journalists and journalism ethics have been shown contempt on a massive scale. My reports detail it all – the killings, beatings, harassment of every kind.

Since the conflict began, we have kept a close eye on media in the region. Here’s what we have reported over the past year.

- 7 media members have been killed – 1 in Kyiv and 6 in eastern Ukraine;

- At least 170 journalists have been attacked and injured, though some sources put the number much higher;
- Approximately 30 editorial offices and television stations have been vandalized;
- About 80 journalists have been abducted and detained; and
- At least two journalists remain captive.

It may be a cliché to suggest that “truth is the first casualty of war” but, under the circumstances, which cliché would be more appropriate?

That brings me to one of the biggest issues we face today – the uncontrolled proliferation of propaganda. Last week I spoke at the annual meeting of the European Federation of Journalists. The meeting happened to be scheduled for Moscow. It was an appropriate forum and place for the discussion.

Propaganda is yet another ugly scar on the face of modern journalism, which is why I raise the issue today. It is not my responsibility as the Representative to teach anyone how to write and report. But I can ask questions – the tough questions that we should all be asking ourselves and one another.

I call on governmental authorities, wherever they own media outlets directly or by proxy, to stop corrupting the profession, to stop spreading propaganda, to stop presenting a world through the media that is as Orwellian as the era we lived through and came to an end 25 years ago. In the absence of real, critical journalism, democracy suffers and deliberate disinformation becomes the standard.

As I said in a Communique earlier this year, propaganda is dangerous when it dominates the public sphere and prevents individuals from freely forming their opinions, thus distorting pluralism and the open exchange of ideas. Today, in the 21st century, as it was in the past, state media is the main vehicle of propaganda. As it is dangerous for peace and security, it should be transformed into true public service media or privatized.

It is time for government to get out of the news business.

And I asked in Moscow at the European Federation of Journalists meeting last week, isn't it time for national professional organizations and self-regulatory bodies to evaluate the state of journalism? To take a long, hard look in the mirror?

I also called upon journalists' organizations, self-regulatory bodies and the owners and publishers of media outlets take a serious look at the content they are producing.

This propaganda evident in media today does a disservice to all credible, ethical journalists who have fought for and, in some cases, given their lives to produce real, honest journalism.

Twenty five years ago, when the Berlin Wall finally collapsed, we all could see a bright future – free of a trumped-up, Orwellian unreality. The sun was rising on that horizon. Today, 25 years later, I must ask – why have we returned to this? Why is that sun now setting?

Can't we do better? I think we can.

And what better time to start that than today – 25 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, when we all were imbued with a sense that the golden days were ahead. This time, however, all interested parties, including international organizations, must stop simply committing and recommitting with high-sounding words on paper and just do it, in practice.

Issues raised with participating States

Albania

On **17 June** I issued a public statement condemning an attack on journalists who were reporting on a police raid in a village in southern Albania. According to reports, a vehicle with a journalist, camera operator, broadcast technician and driver from A1 Report television was shot at by masked armed people and later set on fire. The car, marked with the station's logo, was destroyed along with the equipment inside it. Journalist Gerti Xhaja was briefly held hostage and released with the assistance of local residents.

On **21 October** I issued a public statement calling on the authorities to investigate a hacker attack on the website of the Albanian Public Broadcaster that happened the previous week.

Armenia

On **22 July** I issued a public statement expressing concern about a court ruling that forced the Hraparak newspaper and Ilur.am news portal to disclose their sources as part of a criminal investigation involving a high-level police official of the Shirak region. I noted that the right of journalists to protect the identity of confidential sources is a key principle in investigative journalism. Unfortunately on 22 September the appeals court upheld the ruling.

On **10 September** I wrote to the authorities about Marine Khachatryan, a journalist with A1+ television, who was attacked while reporting on a public protest near Parliament by the director of the Parliament's security services. The incident took place in the presence of police officers providing security. I expressed hope the incident would receive due attention.

On **29 September** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Edward Nalbandian and issued a public statement on **30 September** expressing concern about recent attacks on journalists and the lack of effective measures to end the climate of impunity. On 19 September Taguhi Hovhannisyan, a journalist with the newspaper Haykakan Zhamanak, was intimidated by the head of the Armenian diaspora in Kazakhstan, while covering a public event at the State Opera and Ballet Theatre in Yerevan. Bodyguards seized her phone and erased its memory.

It is of concern that the Special Investigative Service refused to open a criminal case in a recent attack on Khachatryan and that an investigation into the assault and detention of Ani Gevorkyan, a journalist with the newspaper Chorrord Ishkhanutyun, which I raised with the authorities on 14 February, was dropped.

On 14 October I received a response from the Press Secretary of the President indicating that criminal investigations have been launched in the Hovhannisyan and Khachatryan incidents on charges of obstruction of journalists in exercising their professional duties.

On 25 November I learned that the investigation into the 10 September attack on Marine Khachatryan was discontinued due to lack of evidence.

Austria

On **21 July** I wrote to the authorities welcoming plans to abolish the obligation of confidentiality for officials (Amtsverschwiegenheit) and to expand the right of access to information in Austria. I also provided a legal review examining two draft laws, one proposed by political parties and another put forward by the Chancellery.

(See Legal reviews)

Azerbaijan

On **20 June** I wrote to the authorities sharing my concern regarding developments involving several journalists including the following: On 5 June a criminal defamation lawsuit was filed against Zabil Mugabiloglu, chief editor of the news website Gunxeber.com and the newspaper Yeni Musavat by a local public official over an article alleging corruption. On 24 June I learned that the criminal suit against Mugabiloglu had been dismissed.

On 18 June freelance journalist Arshad Ibragimov was arrested for blackmail in Ganja stemming from an extortion case filed against him by a local public official. On the same day criminal defamation charges were filed in Baku against Elchin Zahiroglu and Intigam Valihoglu, both with the Aznews.az online portal, by singer Matanet Iskenderli who claimed she was insulted by articles on the portal.

I expressed hope that such serious charges would be carefully weighed.

On 25 June I learned that the Supreme Court upheld the conviction and 5-year sentence imposed on Hilal Mamedov, chief editor of the newspaper Tolishi Sado, on charges of drug possession, high treason and inciting hatred. I raised his case on 27 September 2013.

On 27 June I learned that the appeals court upheld the conviction and 10-year sentence imposed on of Nijat Aliyev, editor-in-chief of the azadxeber.org news website, for various crimes, including drug possession and inciting hatred. I raised his case on 11 December 2013.

On 4 July I learned that the Supreme Court upheld the conviction and 8-year sentence imposed on Araz Guliyev, editor of the news website xeber44, for "illegal possession, storage and transportation of firearms," "participation in activities that disrupt public order," "inciting ethnic and religious hatred," "resisting authority" and "offensive action against the flag and emblem of Azerbaijan." I raised his case on 11 April 2013.

On **7 July** I issued a public statement condemning jail sentences handed down to bloggers Omar Mamedov and Abdul Abilov.

On 20 August I learned that the appeals court rejected Mamedov's request to review the case.

On 15 July I learned that a court had extended the pretrial confinement of Zerkalo journalist Rauf Mairkadyrov who was arrested in April 2014 on charges of high treason.

On 15 July I learned that a court had extended the pre-trial confinement of Mirkadyrov, who was arrested in April 2014 on charges of high treason. I raised his case on 22 April. On 20 November his confinement was extended for five more months.

On **5 August** I issued a public statement voicing concern about the arrest of prominent free expression advocate Rasul Jafarov and called on the authorities to release him and stop the persecution of critical voices.

I also expressed alarm about criminal charges against activists of the NGOs supporting media freedom, effectively suspending their work. According to reports, in May 2014 the Prosecutor General's Office froze the bank accounts and launched criminal investigations into the activities of Denmark-based International Media Support (IMS) and US-based IREX alleging abuse of power and forgery. Also frozen were the bank accounts of the Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety (IRFS), an Azerbaijani media NGO.

I also expressed regret that Azadliq had been forced to suspend publication apparently due to ongoing financial difficulties. I was pleased to learn that the newspaper has since resumed publishing.

On 23 October I learned that upon the prosecutor's request, Jafarov's arrest had been extended for three more months.

On **6 August** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Elmar Mammadyarov expressing concern about the travel ban imposed on Emin Huseynov, Chairman of the Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety. Huseynov was prevented from going to Istanbul for urgent medical care. Allegedly the ban was imposed by the Prosecutor's Office. Given Huseynov's health condition I asked the authorities to lift the ban.

On **8 August** I issued another public statement detailing the continuing intimidation of journalists, media freedom activists and organizations, including the confiscation of the computer of Huseynov's mother.

I also noted that the bank accounts of the Media Rights Institute (MRI), a prominent Azerbaijani media NGO, and its Director Rashid Hajili had been frozen.

I said that these cases are further proof of a wide-scale deterioration of the media freedom situation and said that, while I do not challenge the lawful right of the authorities to scrutinize the activities of NGOs, such actions should not be pursued to silence critical voices.

On **13 August** I wrote to Foreign Affairs Minister Mammadyarov asking for information about the arrest of Murad Adilov, the brother of Natig Adilov, a journalist with Azadliq newspaper. On 11 August police officers arrested Murad Adilov on drug possession charges.

In December 2013 the journalist was summoned to Baku police headquarters, interrogated on matters related to his work as a journalist and received an official warning.

I expressed hope that the incident with Murad Adilov is not linked to Natig Adilov's professional activities.

On **22 August** I issued a public statement asking the authorities to investigate a brutal attack on Ilgar Nasibov, a journalist contributing to several media outlets, including the Turan News Agency and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. He was assaulted on 21 August in his office at the Resource Centre for Development of NGOs and Democracy in Nakhichevan. He sustained serious injuries, including a concussion and a broken nose, cheekbones and ribs. The assailants also destroyed office equipment.

Nasibov has been prosecuted, threatened and physically attacked several times in the past.

I again expressed concern about the continuing intimidation of IRFS. In addition to frozen bank accounts and confiscation of property earlier in August, the IRFS office was closed by law enforcement authorities and its staff was interrogated.

On 19 September I received a Note Verbale from the Permanent Mission reacting to my statements of 5 August and 22 August regarding the cases of Rasul Jafarov and Ilgar Nasibov, respectively, and commenting on my assessment of the media freedom environment in the country.

On **29 August** I wrote to the Foreign Affairs Minister Mammadyarov raising the detention of Seymour Hazi, one of the leading columnists for the newspaper Azadliq and a presenter on the web-based program “Azerbaijan Saati.”

The police detained Hazi on hooliganism, but did not disclose the actions that led to the charges. Hazi had been threatened physically and assaulted several times. I publicly condemned an attack on him on 28 March 2011 and also wrote to the authorities about the incident on 5 April 2011.

On 30 August a district court ordered Hazi to remain in custody for two months. Although this period expired, the journalist remains under arrest for the court hearing that has started.

On **10 September** I wrote to the authorities raising the refusal to grant a visa to Jutta Sommerbauer, foreign policy editor with the Austrian newspaper Die Presse.

Sommerbauer planned to report on the official visit to Baku by Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz.

On **31 October** I wrote to the authorities raising recent cases involving the prosecution of journalists and asking for additional information.

In July freelance journalist Arshad Ibragimov was sentenced to 11 years in prison for blackmail. I raised his arrest with the authorities in my letter on 20 June 2014. Reportedly, the case is currently in the appeals court. Ibragimov denies all allegations.

I also noted conviction on 30 October of Khalid Garayev, a correspondent for Azadliq and the technical director of the Internet television channel Azerbaijan Saati. Garayev was arrested on 29 October and sentenced to 25 days of administrative arrest on charges of hooliganism and disobedience to police for allegedly using obscene language.

I once again offered my Office’s assistance to help Azerbaijan in achieving much-needed improvements to media freedom. On a number of occasions I also offered to visit Baku to

help address the issues I raise. I hope such a visit will take place soon and that I would be able to meet high-level officials to seek a joint solution.

On **10 November** I issued a public statement following the detention of Azerbaijani blogger Mehman Huseynov. He was detained at Baku Airport on 10 November when trying to depart for Tbilisi to attend the 11th South Caucasus Media Conference, invited by my Office. I said that practically all independent media representatives and media NGOs have been purposefully persecuted under various, often unfounded and disturbing charges. I repeated my call to the authorities to end this hostile attitude.

On 11 November the Permanent Mission issued a press release in reaction to my statement commenting on my assessment of the media freedom environment in the country.

On 18 November I was pleased to receive information that the Government has agreed to my request to visit the country. Plans for a December visit are being discussed.

Belarus

On **2 July** I received a reply from the authorities regarding the detention of a crew near Minsk Arena on 9 May while covering the Ice Hockey World Championship. I was told the group was detained because its members did not identify themselves as media while conducting polls on residents' attitudes toward the tournament. Also, none of them had appropriate accreditation. After producing identification, the journalists were released.

On **30 July** I wrote to the authorities expressing concern about the 3-year sentence in a penal colony handed down to Aleksey Zhelnov, the son of blogger Oleg Zhelnov from Bobryusk, on the charges of violence against police.

He also was ordered to pay a fine of 50 million Belarusian roubles. Alexsey Zhelnov was found guilty stemming from an incident on 4 September 2013 when his father and he were detained while reporting on the improper parking of a police car.

I raised this issue because it seems to be a part of a larger pattern of continuing intimidation of Oleg Zhelnov, who is well-known for expressing critical views in on his blog. Oleg Zhelnov has been detained by police several times and has faced criminal and administrative charges.

On 11 September I received a reply from the authorities saying that Aleksey Zhelnov was sentenced for inflicting minor injuries on a police officer. It was also stated that the Interior Ministry does not have information about the affiliation of Aleksey Zhelnov and Oleg Zhelnov with media.

On **18 August** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Makei about factual blocking access to the independent news website Charter97.org. I encouraged the authorities to make sure citizens have unrestricted access to the Internet.

On 11 September I received a reply from the authorities stating that no restrictions were imposed on access to the website. The partial lack of access was due to the improper functioning of communication lines of one of the Russian partners of the Belarusian ISP, which had been repaired.

On **15-16 September** I paid an official visit to the country.

I met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Makei and Minister of Information Liliya Ananich, civil society representatives and journalists and discussed the practice of short-term detention of media, the need to reform media legislation, media accreditation requirements for journalists and the need to introduce more effective ways to access information.

I reiterated the readiness of my Office to provide expert advice, in line with OSCE media freedom commitments and best practices, and insisted on the need to engage civil society in discussions on the reform process. I also expressed the readiness of my Office to facilitate a dialogue on joint activities of government institutions and media organizations and organize a workshop on accreditation of journalists, where international experts would share best practices.

(See Visits)

I opened a training seminar on “Improving Practices of Relations between Law Enforcement Agencies and Media Workers of Belarus”, jointly organized by my Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was attended by Interior Ministry representatives and journalists from independent and state-run media.

(See Training)

With regret I noted that the repeated appeals of the Belarusian Association of Journalists to change accreditation requirements have failed.

I also noticed that the practice of short-term detention continues. On 20 October freelance journalists Mariya Artsibasheva and Alexander Lyubenchuk were held briefly while conducting an interview in Minsk.

On **30 September** I wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Makei expressing my concern about the continued practice of short-term detention and persecution of journalists due to lack of accreditation, the issues I raised with the authorities during my visit to Minsk on 15-16 September.

On 16 September Sergei Satsyuk and Alexander Borozenko with BelaPAN news agency and freelance journalist Natalya Volokida were detained by police while covering judicial proceedings in Minsk and released after three hours.

On 25 September journalist Marina Molchanova with Bobruiskii Courier was fined 4.8 million Belarusian roubles for the illegal production and dissemination of media products in co-operation with Belsat TV.

On **8 October** I issued a public statement renewing my call on authorities to reform accreditation requirements for freelance journalists working with foreign media. The statement followed new cases where journalists received administrative sentences because of lack of accreditation.

On October 8 a district court in Mogilev ruled that freelance journalist Aleksandr Burakov was guilty of “the illegal production and distribution of media products” for Deutsche Welle. Burakov was fined 6 million Belarusian roubles. On 16 September police searched the homes of Burakov and his parents and confiscated computer equipment.

On October 7 the Grodno district court fined freelance journalist Andrey Meleshko 5.25 million Belarusian roubles for working for Polish-based Radio Raciya. Meleshko also received fines on the same charges on 16 June this year which I raised with the authorities.

In 2014 alone approximately 10 administrative cases have been launched against journalists for co-operating with foreign media without accreditation. The journalists have been fined and issued warnings.

On 17 November I received a reply from the authorities on the cases raised in my interventions of 30 September and 8 October informing that all journalists were prosecuted and detained for having no accreditation.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

On **23 June** I issued a public statement condemning an attack on a television crew in Busovaca. Journalist Sanela Kajmovic-Sojaric and cameraman Nihad Karic from Federation Television were attacked while covering a homecoming event for a person previously convicted of war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

On **24 June** I issued a public statement condemning the assault on prominent writer and columnist Slavo Kukić, who was hospitalized with head injuries. I also expressed concern over an attempted break-in at the BiH Press Council, following a string of incidents targeting the organization.

On **10 October** I issued a public statement calling on the authorities to end impunity for attacks against journalists following a death threat on Siniša Vukelić, editor of the online portal Capital.ba, at a petrol station in Banja Luka.

On **21 October** I issued a public statement calling on the authorities to investigate hacker attacks on the websites of the FENA news agency and BUKA magazine.

On **22 October** I issued a public statement calling on the authorities to investigate threats against all media representatives, following death threats against cameraman Emir Hrcic and reporter Omer Hasanovic of Federation Television. In my statement, I also recalled previous attacks against members of the media this year that remain unsolved.

I welcomed the decision on 6 November by the District Court of Banja Luka to overturn a ruling of 11 October 2013 finding Ljiljana Kovacevic, a journalist for the Beta news agency, liable for defaming the president of Republika Srpska. On 18 October 2013 I had issued a public statement expressing serious concern over the lower court decision. (See Regular Report to the Permanent Council of 28 November 2013).

Canada

On **24 June** I issued a public statement expressing concern about a ruling by the Supreme Court of British Columbia ordering Google to take down URLs worldwide of a company found liable for copyright and trademark infringement in Canada.

The court's decision, in essence, expands the territorial application of Canadian law and forces Internet search engines to police their sites worldwide for illegal Internet content.

I said it was unsettling to see a provincial court expand its power and authority worldwide on what should be a local or national matter and that search engines such as Google and Internet service providers should not shoulder the burden of enforcing private property rights.

Croatia

On **13 August** I issued a public statement condemning an attack on journalist Domagoj Margetic, who sustained head injuries when assaulted close to his home in Zagreb.

On **11 July** in a public statement I called on the authorities to respect free speech on social media platforms, following a case in which the police in Đakovo in eastern Croatia arrested and fined an individual for offending police officers on Facebook.

Estonia

On **30 July** I wrote to the authorities for information about two Russian journalists who were deported from the country. According to media reports, reporter Maxim Gritsenko and cameraman Vyacheslav Amelyutin, from Zvezda state television were detained at the Tallinn airport passport control unit on 25 July for five hours, after which they were deported to Russia.

In a 6 August response the authorities said the journalists were denied entry because the "information filed about the purpose of their stay in Estonia was inaccurate" and that it had nothing to do with their journalistic activity.

Georgia

On **2 October** I wrote to the authorities to express my concern about an assault on Zaza Davitaia, a journalist with the newspaper Asaval-Dasavali. On 30 September Davitaia was attacked on his way to work in Tbilisi. He suffered multiple injuries, including a broken rib and a concussion.

On 24 October I received a response from the authorities informing me that an investigation was launched and two suspects had been identified. Unfortunately, I learned that on 22 October Davitaia was attacked again. Reportedly, the perpetrator was identified and arrested.

On **10-11 November** I visited Tbilisi for the 11th South Caucasus Media Conference: Public Service Broadcasting in the Digital Age. During the visit I met Chair of the Parliament David Usupashvili and discussed current media freedom issues in Georgia, including the future of the Georgian Public Service Broadcaster (GPB) and the challenges faced by Rustavi 2 television channel.

I said that the developments around GPB remain among the issues I continue to follow closely and urged the Parliament to elect the remaining two members of its Supervisory Board soon to make the GPB fully operational. I also expressed hope that the investigation into reports that the office of Rustavi 2, one of the largest television channels in Georgia, was under video and audio surveillance will soon bear results and the perpetrators will be brought to justice.

Germany

On **12 September** I issued a public statement taking note of a recent series of acts of vandalism against the editorial offices of the daily German newspaper Lausitzer Rundschau, including marking the walls of their regional offices in Spremberg and Lübbenau with graffiti containing threats as well as fascist and anti-Semitic symbols. The newspaper was the target of similar attacks in 2012.

I said that these threats and acts must be stopped and that I was confident that the authorities would take the necessary precautions to ensure the journalists' safety. I also welcomed the fact that the attacks had been publicly condemned by the Prime Minister of Brandenburg.

Greece

On **27 August** I wrote to the authorities about a change in the appointment procedure of the supervisory board of the Public Service Broadcaster making it possible for its members to be elected by a simple majority, following the Government's recommendations of candidates. It has also been reported that such candidates will not be voted by the entire Parliament but by a specific commission comprised of representatives of legislative groups and other organs of the chamber.

I said that these amendments may raise questions about possible political interference and a lack of independence of the supervisory board, and that the legislative changes were carried out quickly, not allowing time for public debate. I asked the authorities to share a copy of the amended legislation with my Office.

On 10 November I received an English translation of the amendments and which my Office is currently assessing.

On **5 September** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Evangelos Venizelos regarding the draft anti-racism law. I said that Article 2 of the draft law would criminalize denial of genocide and incitement to hatred and discrimination, provisions which may be used to excessively limit free expression. I said that efforts to fight racism and combat racially motivated violence are indispensable in every democracy. I also noted that the right to freely express ourselves does not stop at topics deemed proper or respectful, but also extends to issues that parts of the society may find offensive, shocking or disturbing. I also pointed out the reservations of more than 100 historians and academics in Greece who were greatly concerned with the freedom of expression implications of the draft law. I asked the authorities to provide my Office with the draft legislation.

On 7 October I was pleased to receive a detailed reply from Minister Venizelos. He informed me that the draft law was adopted on 9 September and assured me that the scope of Article 2 fully complies with both the Constitution of Greece, and, among others, with Article 10

paragraph 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights. He added that the criminalization in question concerns only intentional conduct, the details of which are carefully defined in the law, and an expression of opinions and views does not suffice *per se* to criminalize such behaviour. The Minister stated that the freedom to discuss all issues of public importance or interest is not limited by the law and reiterated the readiness of his Government to continue co-operating with my Office.

Hungary

On 17 July I received a reply from the authorities to my remarks in the Regular Report to the Permanent Council of 19 June 2014 welcoming the Constitutional Court decision of 5 March 2014, stating that opinions, including value judgments, expressed on public issues cannot give rise to civil liability. The authorities said that the Constitutional Court did not view opinions regarding public figures as generally non-actionable. If opinions are expressed about the personal and family lives of public figures or what is said goes beyond damaging their honour and harms their human dignity, they said it is the responsibility of the courts to develop a judicial practice consistent with these principles.

The authorities also reacted to my comments on a 28 May Constitutional Court ruling regarding content providers' liability for comments posted on their websites by third parties, which also was in my report of 19 June. According to the authorities, the provider's liability for comments only can be determined following detailed examination and this decision is consistent with the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the *Delfi v. Estonia* case.

Kazakhstan

On **22 August** I issued a public statement expressing disappointment at a Supreme Court decision upholding the closure of *Pravdivaya Gazeta* for minor administrative violations such as stating erroneous imprint data.

The court's decision effectively makes the newspaper the latest in Kazakhstan to be closed by the authorities. More than 30 media outlets have been closed since late 2012 with authorities citing administrative code violations or publishing of extremist views as the reasons.

I pointed out to the authorities that media should not be punished disproportionately for minor administrative violations. My Office provided Kazakh authorities with a legal review of the administrative code in 2013 that advised removing the excessive penalties for administrative missteps.

On **22 October** I wrote to Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov regarding reports of the blocking of the websites of *CA-News.org* and *medusa.io*.

CA-News.org, a popular Central Asian News portal in Kyrgyzstan, said its site has been blocked without explanation since July by a majority of providers, including *Kazakhtelecom*.

Meduza.io, a Russian-language Latvian-based news site, went online on 20 October and was reported inaccessible shortly thereafter. It remains blocked.

I requested the authorities to inquire and help re-establishing access to these sites. Limitations on access to information must not be applied cavalierly or opaquely.

On **26 November** I issued a public statement saying that an injunction to stop the distribution and publication of the weekly magazine ADAMBol further endangered media pluralism in the country. The Almaty City Department for Internal Policies claimed that an article published three months earlier contained extremist war propaganda. I said that these drastic and disproportionate measures did not correspond to the claim and contributed to an atmosphere of fear in the media. I also noted that webpages carrying reports and comments on the closure of the magazine, including webpages on adilsoz.kz, azattyk.org and vlast.kz, were not accessible in Kazakhstan.

Kyrgyzstan

On **17 October** I issued a public statement asking the Parliament to reconsider its decision to criminalize the dissemination of LGBT-related information.

I noted that the law is so vaguely worded and open for interpretation that, if adopted, it would have consequences for free expression and media freedom and could make criminals out of those who even just report on instances of LGBT discrimination.

I noted that this legislation as well as the recent *de facto* reintroduction of criminal defamation also runs contrary to notable achievements in media law reform in recent years.

On **30 September – 1 October** I visited Kyrgyzstan to participate in the 80th PEN International Congress in Bishkek and met with the heads of the parliamentary committees on Education, Science, Religion and Sport and on Human Rights, Constitutional Legislation and State Structure to discuss recent legislative initiatives of the parliament. I touched upon the draft laws on “On propaganda of non-traditional sexual relationships” and the law “On non-commercial organizations” and their potentially negative affect on freedom of expression. I took note of the reasoned discussion in Parliament that led ultimately to the rejection of introducing an administrative liability for insult and expressed hope that this openness for the arguments from media representatives and civil society will also be shown in the upcoming debate on the two laws.

I also offered support in the preparing for the digital switchover and agreed that my Office would review draft legislation.

(See Visits)

Latvia

On **1 August** I issued a public statement expressing concern about the Riga Central District Court decision to freeze assets worth almost €23,000 of Cits Medijs, publisher of the public affairs magazine Ir. The court order followed the filing of a civil lawsuit by insolvency administrator Maris Spruds who claimed that he had been libeled in investigative articles published by the magazine. I welcomed Prime Minister Laimdota Straujuma’s call on the court to justify its decision and to dispel concern about pressure on independent media.

Lithuania

On **29 August** I issued a public statement welcoming a ruling from the Vilnius Regional Court which found illegal the wiretapping of the telephone conversations of 10 current and former employees of the Baltic News Service (BNS), one of the largest news agencies in Lithuania.

In July the same court upheld complaints by three BNS editors over wiretapping in the same case. The court also ruled that other law enforcement actions, including secret surveillance, searches and an order to reveal sources of information, were unlawful. In July the Parliament also adopted amendments to the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public that provide additional protection to journalists' sources, which I welcomed in the statement as well.

On **29 October** my Office attended the conference in Vilnius "Television and Radio: Current challenges," organized by the Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania.

(See Visits)

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

On 15-17 July my Office, together with the OSCE Mission in Skopje, organized a two-day workshop on media self-regulation for members of the Council of Media Ethics, held in Mavrovo. The workshop was moderated by Dieter Loraine, OSCE commissioned independent expert who was assigned to prepare a strategy and annual action plan following this first training and needs assessment visit.

On 19 August I received a letter from the Minister of Information Society and Administration Ivo Ivanovski, in which he informed me of the proceeding dialogue and consultation with relevant parties and stakeholders following the enactment of two media laws which my Office had reviewed. In his letter, Minister Ivanovski also reiterated his support for the expertise provided by my Office toward the establishment of an independent Press Council, and stressed the importance of engaging both journalists associations of the country in this process.

On **29 August** I replied to Minister Ivanovski providing information about future plans related to the engagement of my Office in assisting to the Council of Media Ethics on running the organization. I also assured him that all members of the Press Council had been invited to participate in the workshops.

On **4 September** following the first workshop I sent the draft strategy and annual action plan to the president of the Council of Media Ethics for their comments.

On **6 October** I wrote to the authorities to call attention to a civil defamation judgment against Fokus journalist Vlado Apostolov and its Editor-in-chief Jadranka Kostova, which was upheld by the appellate court. The judgment ordered them to pay €6,000 in damages and €3,000 in court costs for damaging the reputation and honour of Security and Counter-Intelligence Directorate Director Saso Mijalkov. This was another example of the urgent need for an established ceiling on damages in civil defamation cases to prevent the bankruptcy of media outlets.

On **7-8 October** my Office, together with the OSCE Mission in Skopje, organized a second workshop for the Council of Media Ethics, held in Skopje, to further discuss strategy and an annual action plan.

On **16 October** I submitted a two-year strategy, including action points, to the Council on Media Ethics. The handover of the strategy followed two workshops in July and October where codes of ethics, working structures and complaints procedures and a budget were agreed upon.

On **24 October** I wrote to Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski to again raise the trial of journalist Tomislav Kezarovski. (See Reports to Permanent Council of 19 June 2014 and 28 November 2013).

I have drawn attention to this case on several occasions, including his initial arrest and the lengthy pre-trial detention. After his conviction, he has been placed under house arrest. I will follow his appeal closely and hope that he will be exonerated.

Moldova

On **29 August** I wrote to Chairman of the Parliament Igor Corman sharing concern about the delay in electing new members of Supervisory Board of the National Public Service Broadcaster – Teleradio Moldova.

The Supervisory Board, a key managerial body responsible for strategic decision-making, has not functioned since December 2013. After the terms of six of its nine members expired, the Broadcasting Coordinating Council proposed 12 candidates to the Parliament, which has failed to follow up on it.

I stated that further delays may seriously affect the broadcaster's operations.

On **21 July** I wrote to Chairman Corman and on **2 September** I issued a public statement raising concern about draft amendments to an anti-extremism law that could pose a threat to freedom of expression on the Internet.

The amendments to the Law on Countering Extremist Activities, approved by Parliament in the first reading in July, would give the Information and Security Service of Moldova the power to order Internet service providers to temporarily block access to online content of an extremist nature.

I said that while I agree that the fight against extremism is an important security issue and a universal challenge affecting all OSCE participating States, I was worried that such practice might be arbitrarily interpreted and could lead to undue and disproportionate restrictions, thus limiting free media in the name of countering extremism without proper judicial procedures and oversight. I called on the authorities to eliminate these provisions. The amendments are still pending in Parliament.

Mongolia

On **10 July** I issued a public statement expressing concern about the blocking of the popular news website Amjilt.com by the Mongolian Communications Regulatory Commission (CRC). According to Amjilt, the blocking followed the CRC's informal request to remove a critical investigative article mentioning the Prime Minister. Amjilt.com management did not take down the story. Even though CRC did not claim responsibility for this action and Amjilt.com did not receive an official request to take down the story, the CRC placed the website on its list of conflicting domains which are blocked for violation of intellectual property rights.

I noted that such a measure could also have a chilling effect on investigative journalism, one of the pillars of free media and urged the authorities to encourage pluralistic discourse on all issues of public importance.

On **26 August** I issued a public statement on the imposition of a 3-month prison sentence on Ts. Bat, a blogger, for defaming a high-ranking political figure through social media. Bat became the first person in Mongolia to be found guilty of defamation by social media. I said that prison is a disproportionate and unacceptable measure for defamation.

On **1 September** I wrote to the Foreign Minister regarding a draft regulation of the CRC on "General Requirements and Conditions for Digital Content Service."

I noted that, in line with OSCE commitments and international standards, restrictions on free expression, whether through online or traditional media, should be very narrowly defined. Government regulations should not lead to undue and disproportionate restrictions or grant powers to the regulator that could amount to censorship.

I look forward to paying an official visit to Mongolia in May 2015.

Montenegro

On **2 July** I paid an official visit to the country where I met with President Filip Vujanović, Prime Minister Milo Đukanović, and President of the Supreme Court Vesna Medenica. I also met with Igor Lukšić, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Raško Konjević, Minister of Interior, members of the Parliament, civil society, journalists and media representatives.

Among other issues, I discussed the issue of journalists' safety and the lack of unity among members of the media. I welcomed the establishment of a joint commission to monitor investigations of cases of threats and attacks against journalists was a positive step, but stressed it cannot replace state institutions in investigating and prosecuting perpetrators and masterminds of such crimes.

(See Visits)

On **9 July** I wrote to Prime Minister Đukanović thanking him and Deputy Minister Lukšić and Minister Konjević, for the excellent organization of the visit, the commitment for co-operation and reiterating some main concerns and opportunities for future co-operation.

On **17 July** in a public statement I welcomed the readiness of the media community to improve self-regulation and begin confidence building measures, an initiative agreed on during my visit on 2 July.

On **14 October** I issued a public statement announcing the beginning of roundtable discussions held in Vienna and organized by my Office, for media members to review the professional code of ethics as a first step to improve media self-regulation in the country.

On 15 December the working group on the amendments to the Montenegro journalists' Code of Ethics will have its first meeting in Podgorica. This meeting is a direct result of the meetings during my official visit on 2 July, the follow-up visit on 17 July and the meeting of media owners and editors in my Office on 14 October. In addition to the modernization of the Code, it is expected that his process will also improve media self-regulation in the country and start the process of confidence-building among members of the media.

Netherlands

On **15 August** I wrote to the authorities to convey my concern about recent attacks on three journalists covering an anti-Islamic State demonstration in The Hague. I expressed my trust that those incidents would be thoroughly investigated.

On 20 August I received a reply from the authorities saying that the police were investigating the attacks and that two suspects had been apprehended who would face appropriate judicial procedures.

On **3 September** I wrote to the authorities to express concern over criminal defamation and insult charges brought against journalist André Hoozeboom arising from his blog Go!72 in December 2013.

Criminal defamation charges should not be used against journalists dealing with critical and delicate topics. I took the opportunity to call on the government to initiate legal reforms that would fully decriminalize defamation.

Norway

On **30 September** I welcomed a decision by the Norwegian Data Protection Authority (DPA) finding that the Armed Forces registration of nine investigative journalists was illegal. Following an investigative story in a daily newspaper in 2011, an army unit collected information on the journalists, which became available to the armed forces' intelligence service. The DPA ruled that even though the files did not contain comprehensive nor particularly sensitive information, the journalists' right of privacy was violated. In my statement, I said that registration and monitoring of journalists has a negative effect on journalists' ability to get information and build confidence with their sources and therefore cannot be justified.

Poland

On **19 June** I expressed concern in a public statement about attempts by law enforcement to confiscate materials and force journalists of Wprost magazine to reveal confidential sources. On 18 June the editorial office of Wprost was raided by the Prosecutor's Office and Internal Security Agency officers, without a court order, to confiscate recordings of alleged private conversations between the head of the Central Bank and the Interior Minister. I said that these kinds of investigation methods are unacceptable as they have a chilling effect on investigative

journalism and could stifle media freedom. I called upon the authorities to act in compliance with international standards and OSCE commitments.

On **27 October** I wrote to the authorities to learn why the credentials of Russian journalist Leonid Sviridov, a correspondent for the news agency Rossiya Segodnya, had been withdrawn. The response in a letter of 29 October indicated that denying Sviridov's foreign correspondent credentials was "due to his activities in the field of foreign economic relations," and not connected with professional activities. According to later news reports, I learned that the authorities also have started the procedure to withdraw his residence permit.

Romania

On **13 November** I issued a public statement condemning the attack on a journalist by law enforcement officers in Bucharest and called for an investigation. I said that journalists must be able to do their work in a free and safe manner. Attacks on journalists are especially worrying, since the police should ensure the safety of members of the media.

Russian Federation

On 23 June I received a letter from Ambassador-at-Large Konstantin Dolgov, the Foreign Ministry Commissioner for Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, concerning violations of freedom of expression and freedom of the media in Ukraine, in particular with regard to Russian journalists there. Ambassador Dolgov raised concern over the arrest of LifeNews journalists Marat Saichenko and Oleg Sidyakin who were detained by Ukrainian military forces on 18 May; the deaths of journalists Igor Kornelyuk and Anton Voloshin on 17 June and the banning of television broadcasts. On 25 June I responded informing him that I act in strict compliance with my Mandate and use the means provided in it.

On **25 June** I issued a public statement criticizing amendments to the Criminal Code that could further increase government control of the Internet. The amendments, adopted on 20 June, increase criminal liability to up to 5 years in prison for online calls for extremist activity.

I urged the authorities to reconsider because these changes threaten free media and compromise online pluralism in the name of fighting extremism. The anti-extremism law is vaguely worded and could impose disproportionate restrictions on fundamental rights.

I reiterated restrictions on free expression should be carefully defined, as imprecise wording in anti-extremism legislation results in individuals not knowing whether their actions are legal.

I noted with regret that the President of the Russian Federation signed the amendments into law at the end of June.

On **7 July** I issued a public statement calling on the President of the Russian Federation to veto proposed amendments to the Law on Advertising. On 4 July the State Duma approved amendments which prohibit commercials on cable television channels that do not hold a terrestrial broadcasting license or are not on the list of must-carry programmes.

These amendments could lead to cutting off private small- and medium-scale channels from their principal source of revenue, which is advertising. That could further limit media pluralism and the free flow of information in Russia and lead to undue media concentration in the hands of a few, including the state broadcast monopolies.

I also noted that the proposed amendments would negatively affect media plurality with the coming digital switchover, when hundreds of regional broadcasters will lose their terrestrial licenses.

I noted with regret that the President signed the amendments into law on 21 July.

On **9 July** I issued a public statement on the 10th anniversary of the murder of Forbes magazine editor Paul Klebnikov. I called on the authorities to end impunity for crimes committed against journalists in the Russian Federation.

On **21 July** I issued a public statement calling on the authorities to immediately release Yevgeny Agarkov, a journalist with the Ukrainian 2+2 television channel.

On 18 July Agarkov was arrested in Voronezh for working without accreditation. On 30 July he was fined 2,000 roubles (then approximately €42) and expelled from the country. I said that accreditation should not be, in effect, a work permit, such that the failure to obtain one would bar journalists from working.

On **4 August** I issued a public statement mourning the violent death of journalist and blogger Timur Kuashev, whose body was found in a suburb of Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria.

Kuashev, a journalist with Dosh magazine, covered events in the North Caucasus. He was well known for his critical reporting on human rights issues. He reportedly went missing on 31 July and was found dead the next day. He had complained about threats from social network users and law enforcement representatives.

I expressed hope that the authorities would conduct a thorough investigation into the case.

On **21 August** I wrote to the authorities and issued a public statement regarding an attack on the chief editor of the Derbentskie Izvestiya newspaper, Magomed Khanmagomedov, in Dagestan.

On 20 August Khanmagomedov was attacked in his office by two people who beat him and fled. He was also violently attacked in 2010 and 2012.

On **25 August** I wrote to the authorities expressing concern about an attack on Arseniy Vesnin, a journalist with the Ekho Moskvyy radio in St. Petersburg. He was attacked on 24 August while reporting on a pro-Ukrainian demonstration, suffering a traumatic brain injury and a concussion.

I welcomed the immediate detention of the assailant by police and the public condemnation of the attack by the acting governor, Georgy Poltavchenko. On 6 October I received a response from authorities saying the case was being investigated.

I was disappointed to note that a clear violation of the journalist's rights was characterized as mere "petty hooliganism" and the perpetrator was released shortly thereafter.

On **27 August** I wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov and issued a public statement condemning several attacks on journalists in the Pskov region.

On 26 August Vladimir Romensky (Dozhd TV), Ilya Vasyunin (Russkaya Planeta), Nina Petlyanova (Novaya Gazeta), Irina Tumakova (Fontanka.ru), Sergey Kovalchenko and Sergey Zorin (both with Telegraph agency) were assaulted and intimidated while reporting on issues related to the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

I urged the authorities to thoroughly investigate these attacks and bring those responsible to justice.

I also noted that investigative journalist Alexander Krutov with Obshchestvennoye Mneniye magazine was brutally beaten on 26 August close to his home in Saratov. Krutov has been attacked several times before without the assailants being brought to justice.

On 23 October I received a response from authorities informing me that the attack on Krutov was being investigated.

On **30 August** I issued a public statement calling on authorities to fully investigate and prosecute all attacks on journalists following an attack on journalist Lev Schlosberg in Pskov.

Schlosberg, a journalist with the Pskovskaya Guberniya newspaper and an active blogger, was beaten on 29 August near his house. Schlosberg had been reporting on the death of soldiers who might have been killed in the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

On **17 September** I wrote to the authorities expressing concern about assaults against journalists in Novosibirsk.

On 10 September a crew of the Pretsedent television programme, which contributes to Ren-TV and Region TV, was attacked by two people. Journalist Yelena Maltseva and cameraman Alexander Molchanov were investigating allegations about the quality of services provided by a local employment agency. The attackers destroyed the crew's camera and hit Molchanov in the face.

On 11 September the same people reportedly threatened and attempted to attack a crew of the State Television and Radio Company Novosibirsk at the same site, while a representative of the employment agency threatened to break the journalists' camera.

On **18 September** I issued a public statement condemning the growing violence against journalists in Russia following an attack on a BBC crew in Astrakhan.

On 16 September two members of a BBC TV crew were confronted and attacked by at least three people in Astrakhan while reporting about killed Russian servicemen. The attackers smashed the crew's camera and beat the camera operator. Meanwhile, somebody broke into their car and erased video material and computer data from the journalists' equipment.

I said that we were witnessing a clear sign of harassment of free media in Russia. This incident was the latest in a spate of recent attacks against journalists who investigated issues related to the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

I also expressed concern about the 10-11 September attacks on the crews of the Pretsedent television programme and the State Television and Radio Company in Novosibirsk, the issues I raised with authorities on 17 September.

On 2 October and 23 October I received responses from the authorities saying that the attack on the BBC crew was being investigated. I was also told that law enforcement is trying to identify suspects in the attack on the Pretsedent television crew.

On **24 September** I issued a public statement calling on the authorities to carefully consider proposed changes to legislation on media ownership requirements.

On 23 September the State Duma approved amendments to the Law on Mass Media lowering foreign ownership share in media outlets from 50 percent to 20 percent. The amendments extend to all media, including broadcast, print and online outlets.

I expressed concern that the proposed changes would limit media pluralism.

With regret, I learned that on 14 October the President signed the amendments into law.

On **3 October** I wrote to the authorities expressing concern about an attack on Maxim Zakharov, chief editor of Smolenskaya Narodnaya Gazeta.

On 2 October Zakharov was attacked by two people. Zakharov had reportedly informed the police about threats several weeks before this incident.

On 23 October I received a response from authorities informing me that the attack was being investigated.

On 29 October I learned with regret that Aleksander Tolmachev, chief editor of the Novochoerkasskie Novosti newspaper and owner of two other print periodicals, Upolnomochen Zayavit and Pro Rostov, whose case I raised with the authorities on 13 January 2012, was sentenced to 9 years in prison for extortion. I hope that the Appeals Court will overturn this harsh sentence.

On **13 November** I wrote to the authorities expressing concern about the detention of Oleg Potapenko, editor of the Amurburg online newspaper, by representatives of security services in Khabarovsk.

Potapenko was detained for several hours at Khabarovsk Airport on 12 November as he was preparing to leave for Hong Kong. His mobile phone, laptop and tablet were seized and searched. The grounds for his detention were unclear.

Earlier in July, Potapenko was reportedly detained for four hours at the same airport while returning from Tbilisi. His luggage was searched and his tablet and mobile phone were briefly seized, allegedly in search of extremist materials.

On 14 November I learned that the district court in Saint Petersburg denied a request of Anna Sharogradskaya, Director of the Regional Press Institute, to have her files and electronic devices returned that had been seized at the Pulkovo airport. I raised this case on 5 June 2014.

I also noted that the Ministry of Justice included the Regional Press Institute on the government's list of non-governmental organizations acting as a foreign agent. I hope this decision will not prevent the NGO to continue its important work for the benefit of the media and society.

On **19-21 November** I visited Moscow to participate in the annual meeting of the European Federation of Journalists. In the course of the visit I met with editors of independent media outlets: Mikhail Zygar with the television channel Dozhd, Dmitry Muratov with the Novaya Gazeta newspaper, and Aleksey Venediktov with the radio station Echo Moscow. I also met with other civil society representatives at a roundtable "New Internet-related legislation in Russia as it relates to bloggers and online media."

On **19-21 November** I visited Moscow to address EFJ members as a keynote speaker in the annual meeting of the European Federation of Journalists titled "Journalism in Times of Conflict: Impunity, Safety & Ethics." I said that ensuring journalists' safety and breaking the cycle of impunity remain the biggest challenges to overcome for free media. I also addressed the growing phenomenon of propaganda, which poses a threat to journalism as a profession, not least with the rising influence of state-run media outlets.

To express my support for independent media outlets, I met with editors Mikhail Zygar with the television channel Dozhd, Dmitry Muratov with the Novaya Gazeta newspaper and Aleksey Venediktov with the radio station Echo Moscow. During the meeting with Venediktov I agreed to provide assistance in drafting guidelines for station's journalists on using social media platforms. I also attended a roundtable "New Internet-related legislation in Russia as it relates to bloggers and online media" in Moscow.

(See Visits)

Serbia

On **3 July** I issued a public statement condemning the brutal attack of the editor of the FoNet news agency, Davor Pašalić, who sustained serious head injuries. I welcomed the immediate condemnation of the attack by officials and their assurances that everything would be done to bring the perpetrators to justice.

On **16 July** I issued a public statement regretting the ruling by the appeals court in Belgrade against the media outlet B92 for defamation in connection with reporting involving a former Serbian official. This ruling may have a chilling effect on media freedom as it restricts reporting on matters of public interest. International standards call for public officials to endure a higher threshold of criticism by the media.

On **28 August** I wrote to Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić raising a number of issues of concern.

I welcomed the prompt response by the authorities following an attack on Darko Cvetanović, a photojournalist with the Serbian daily newspaper Informer. However, I also raised a

number of attacks on journalists that have still not been solved, including the 3 July attack on Pašalić and the attempted murder of Dejan Anastasijević, a former journalist of the Vreme weekly, which took place in April 2007. As far as I am aware the attackers have not been identified.

I also expressed concern that the Danas daily newspaper was fined 5 million RSD (€42,000) for failing to employ 2 persons with disabilities in accordance with a 2009 law on employment, despite Danas already having 2 people with disabilities on their payroll. Such a disproportionate fine and punitive action could be seen as pressure on this newspaper. I will continue to closely follow this case.

I called attention to the continued blocking and content alteration of online media portals. On 27 August the website of Peščanik was again subject to a DDoS attack, its online content was obstructed and the page was unavailable to the public. The previous week the online web portal autonomija.info also came under hacker attacks. In June, the Kurir daily newspaper stated that their website was subjected to several DDoS attacks.

On **21 October** I issued a public statement indicating that the media outlets 24sata.rs, Blic, e-novine, Kurir and Telegraf had been the victim of hacker attacks. I said that attacks are a threat to cyber security, which is vital to free media and the free flow of information.

On 31 October I met with [Foreign Minister Dačić](#) to discuss media freedom issues in the country and issues I have raised in the past.

On 25 November I received a letter from Foreign Minister Dačić informing me about the progress of investigations into hacking attacks on media websites and also wrote that the Ministry of Internal Affairs is working on resolving cases of attacks on journalists that I have raised.

The Minister also said that Serbia highly respects freedom of the media and expression and that the government and its officials condemn in the strongest possible terms any attempt to violate freedom of the media and free expression and violence against journalists. He also reassured me that the competent institutions would continue to work on solving all reported cases of attacks on the media and their representatives.

He also pointed out the readiness of Serbia, as the incoming OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, to work intensively with my Office and me.

Slovakia

On **24 June** I issued a public statement expressing concern about a recent ruling in which a district court ordered the newspaper Nový Čas to publish an apology to a plaintiff, who was one of three members of the Slovak judiciary suing a daily newspaper for defamation. I said that international standards call for public officials to endure a higher threshold of criticism by the public, including members of the media.

On **8 September** I issued a public statement saying that criminal libel charges filed against journalist Dušan Karolyi pose a threat to free media. Karolyi was brought to court for an article published in August 2013 in the weekly magazine Trend, about a court case against a former police employee. If convicted, Karolyi faces up to 5 years in prison. I called for the

full decriminalization of defamation since criminal charges can be used to protect public officials from criticism.

On 1 October the charges were dismissed.

Slovenia

On **10 October** I issued a public statement calling attention to the criminal trial against Anuška Delić, an investigative journalist with the daily newspaper Delo, who is being prosecuted for publishing classified information, allegedly leaked from the National Intelligence and Security Agency in November 2011. A preliminary hearing on the case started on 15 October. If convicted, Delić faces up to three years in prison. The trial is continuing.

I originally raised her case in a letter to Foreign Minister Karl Erjavec on 27 February. (See Regular Report to the Permanent Council of 19 June 2014).

I welcome the 14 October tweet of Prime Minister Miro Cerar that stated that, because of this case, there is a need to reconsider legislation to ensure journalists can report on issues of public interest free from the threat of criminal prosecution.

On **14 November** I wrote to Foreign Minister Erjavec to express concern over possible criminal charges against two journalists. According to information available to me, Peter Lovšin and Meta Roglič, journalists for the daily newspaper Dnevnik in Ljubljana, also have been subject to charges brought forward by the Slovene Intelligence and Security Agency. I have asked the authorities to provide additional information on this case.

Tajikistan

On **22 July** I issued a public statement calling on the authorities to ensure unrestricted access to the Internet after Odnoklassniki, one of the most popular social platforms in the country with more than 300,000 users, was blocked.

I said undue and arbitrary restrictions could have a chilling effect on Internet freedom and may lead to censorship. I also noted that video-sharing website YouTube has been blocked since early June.

I offered my Office's assistance on self-regulation mechanisms and the protection of media freedom in the Digital Age.

On **23 July** I issued a public statement welcoming the release of Alexander Sodiquov, a Tajik blogger and political commentator on Central Asian politics, from a pretrial detention centre in Dushanbe and expressing hope that the criminal charges would be dropped. He was detained on 16 June and later charged with high treason and espionage after an interview with an activist in Khorog. The University of Exeter, as well as Sodiquov's co-researchers, confirmed that Sodiquov was in Tajikistan to conduct research for the university's project on conflict prevention. On 10 September Sodiquov was allowed to leave Tajikistan to continue his university studies.

I welcomed this decision, but remain concerned that the serious criminal charges against him continue to put a chill on others researching, commentating and writing on Tajik affairs.

On **7 October** I again issued a public statement regarding website blocking. A large number of websites and social media platforms including Vkontakte social network, YouTube and Facebook were blocked beginning 3 October. Severe limitations on mobile Internet services in northern Tajikistan were also reported by the media. The authorities have officially denied any involvement.

During the entire month of October my Office received the following reports: On 10 October the website news.tj of Asia Plus, a major Tajik online news portal, was blocked, then unblocked the following day, then blocked again for two days. After most social websites were unblocked on 13 October, media reported on 31 October on a third wave of blockings – including Facebook, Vkontakte, and Topnews.tj and the Yandex search engine.

This repeated blocking sets a disturbing trend, and I stated that the authorities have a responsibility to ensure that all citizens enjoy unhindered access to information.

Turkey

On **8 August** I issued a public statement expressing concern over the targeting of journalist Amberin Zaman by high-level authorities. The previous day, during a campaign rally in the southern province of Malatya, the then Prime Minister severely criticized the journalist, which spurred a smear campaign on social media that threatened her safety. I said that the right to criticize is an indispensable element of democratic debate that needs to be safeguarded by the authorities.

I was pleased to learn that on 3 October Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said that any threat directed at Amberin Zaman would be considered a threat directed at him. Public condemnation by high level officials in such and similar cases like these is welcomed and needed.

On **3 October** I issued a public statement welcoming a ruling by the Constitutional Court to decrease the power of the country's telecommunications authority, TİB, to block websites and monitor Internet users. A day earlier the court ruled that the authority of TİB to close websites within four hours without a court decision on the grounds of protecting national security, public order or prevention of crime, was unconstitutional. The court also ruled against TİB's right to store Internet data for up to two years.

I recognized that protecting national security is the prerogative of governments but the authorities also must ensure that these measures do not curb the fundamental right of free expression and the right of the media to freely report.

Ukraine

On **28 June** I issued a public statement condemning steps by the self-proclaimed "Donetsk People's Republic" to control media in the Donetsk region of Ukraine. On 26 June the self-proclaimed authorities issued a "decree" demanding that all media outlets register with the "Ministry of Information and Mass Communication" within 10 days or be prohibited from media activities. The decree also applies to bloggers and print media distributors.

I noted the attack on the editorial office of the ProGorod newspaper in Torez in the Donetsk region on 26 June during which the separatist perpetrators destroyed and seized equipment and threatened journalists.

I also noted the abduction of Boris Yuzhik, the editor of the newspaper Druzhkovskiy Rabochii on 27 June and Sergei Dolgov, the editor of the Vestnik Priazovya newspaper in Mariupol on 18 June. I called on the authorities to investigate these attacks and bring the perpetrators to justice. Later Yuzhik was set free.

On **30 June** I wrote to President Petro Poroshenko and issued a public statement in relation to the death of Anatoliy Klyan, a cameraman with Russian Perviy Kanal, and expressing concern about the very worrying situation with security of journalists in eastern Ukraine.

Klyan was shot dead on 30 June after his film crew, along with other Russian journalists, including from LifeNews and Ren-TV, and a group of civilians came under fire while filming near a Ukrainian military compound in Donetsk region. The same day a film crew of Mir 24 channel reportedly also came under fire in Donetsk.

I wrote that I fully understand the difficult situation in Ukraine and the fact that the national authorities do not control some areas in the east of the country, which are controlled by separatists. However, I called on all parties to the conflict to respect media freedom and refrain from violence against journalists.

I urged the authorities to thoroughly investigate the circumstances of all deadly attacks on members of the media and to hold those responsible accountable.

In addition, I expressed hope that the ongoing investigation of the tragic death of Vesti daily journalist Vyacheslav Veremyi would be completed and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I was pleased to learn that on 1 July President Petro Poroshenko ordered an investigation into the murder of Anatoliy Klyan and provide security of journalists in eastern Ukraine.

On **25 September** in the course of my visit to Kyiv to participate in the Global Forum for Media Development's conference, I met with First Deputy Foreign Minister Nataliia Galibarenko and Chairman of the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine Yuriy Artemenko. Among other things, I discussed issues related to the safety of journalists, public service broadcasting and banning of media.

I also met with Chief Monitor of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan and discussed ways for enhancing co-operation between our offices.

(See Visits)

On 2 October, 29 August, 1 August and 25 July I received responses from the authorities informing me that investigations into the deaths of journalists Anatoliy Klyan, Andrea Rocchelli, Andrey Mironov, Igor Kornelyuk, Anton Voloshin, and Vyacheslav Veremyi are being carried out. The replies also contained information on other cases I had raised.

On **1 July** I issued a public statement expressing outrage at the detention in the Luhansk region of two Ukrainian journalists from Hromadske TV.

Journalist Nastya Stanko and cameraman Ilya Bezkorovainyi were detained on the evening of 30 June by separatists of the self-proclaimed “Luhansk People’s Republic”. I called on those responsible to release the journalists and to stop attacking the media. I was pleased to learn that they were released two days later.

I also noted that a television tower in Sloviansk came under heavy fire and was demolished on June 30. The tower transmitted Ukrainian television and radio channels covering several towns and villages in the Donetsk region.

On **8 July** I issued a public statement condemning an attack on the editorial office of the newspaper Vesti in Kyiv with smoke grenades and rocks. On July 5 a group wearing masks assaulted an office guard, shattered windows and damaged equipment.

I called on the authorities to carry out a full investigation to identify and bring those responsible to justice, noting that in late June a group attempted to invade Vesti’s editorial office.

On 31 July and 11 September I received letters from the authorities informing that law enforcement had launched a criminal proceeding and pre-trial investigation.

On **11 July** I issued a public statement expressing concern about the continuing attacks by separatist forces against television stations in Luhansk and Crimea, which endanger the safety of journalists and violate the right of people to freely receive information.

On 9 July a group of armed separatists forced the staff of Luganskoye Kabelnoe Televideniye (LKT) to leave the station. The transmission of LKT was replaced by broadcasts of Russian 5 Kanal. On 4 July broadcasting was suspended when separatists seized the office of the Luhansk Regional State Television and Radio Company.

I noted reports about the exclusion of the largest independent broadcaster on the Crimean peninsula, Chernomorskaya TV, from several cable networks in Crimea. Chernomorskaya TV and a number of other Ukrainian television channels were taken off leading cable networks on June 28.

I said that the unilateral decision to stop retransmission of Chernomorskaya TV can further curb media freedom and limit media pluralism in the region, not least since the channel is known for its balanced and objective reporting. I encouraged those responsible for broadcasting regulations on the Crimean peninsula to immediately look into this matter.

I also noted with deep concern reports on 10 July about death threats against a group of Ukrainian journalists and owners of media outlets by the so-called “Russian Liberation Front.”

On **23 July** I issued a public statement condemning the abduction of freelance journalist Anton Skiba in Donetsk and calling for his immediate release. Skiba was abducted on 22 July by armed separatists at a hotel in Donetsk. He had been assisting a CNN film crew.

I expressed concern about other cases of media intimidation by the separatist groups in eastern Ukraine, including the detention, confinement and harassment on 19 July of 10 foreign journalists in Donetsk including representatives of Dagens Nyheter, BBC, The Daily Beast, Nieuwsuur, Time and Russia Today. The journalists were attempting to report on the Malaysia Airlines plane crash; the 15 July attack on Natalia Filatova, a journalist with the Novosti Donbassa news portal, who sustained minor injuries; the 6 July abduction of journalist Darya Shatalova and an attack on and abduction of editor Sergei Sakadynskiy, both with Politika 2.0 news portal in Luhansk. The same day an armed group robbed the news portal's office, stealing all the equipment. Both journalists were released the next day. I said that these actions cannot be tolerated and must stop immediately.

Further, I expressed concern about plans announced on 21 July by the self-proclaimed defense minister of the so-called "Donetsk People's Republic" to effectively ban all media representatives from working in the conflict zone and the territories next to military compounds.

I also noted reports that on 15 July the self-proclaimed authorities announced the switching off of all Ukrainian television channels in Donetsk.

I was pleased to learn that Anton Skiba was set free on 26 July, but also noted that Sergei Sakadynskiy was again abducted on 28 July. His current location remains unknown.

On 25 July I received a letter from the authorities in response to my statement of 17 June providing information on several incidents which involved media representatives.

On **25 July** I issued a public statement demanding the immediate release of journalists who were reported missing in eastern Ukraine.

On 23 July Graham Phillips, a freelance journalist with Russia Today, and Vadim Aksyonov, a cameraman with Anna-News, went missing near the Donetsk Airport. Reportedly, Aksyonov, along with Phillips and another media representative, was held by Ukrainian military forces.

Aksyonov was found the next day, while Phillips was reportedly deported to the United Kingdom on 25 July.

Yury Lelyavsky, a freelance journalist with ZIK, also went missing on 23 July after reportedly he had been detained in the Luhansk region. I learned that Lelyavsky was set free on 8 October.

On **4 August** I issued a public statement condemning the seizure of the property of the Chernomorskaya Company, the largest independent broadcaster on the Crimean peninsula.

On 1 August representatives of the Russian federal bailiff service, accompanied by self-defense militants, seized the channel's property in Simferopol, citing debts owed to the Broadcasting Centre of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. All employees were banned from entering the channel's premises. While seizing Chernomorskaya's property, the bailiffs also seized the equipment of the Information and Press Centre, the hub for independent media in the region, as well as property of the Crimean Centre for Investigative Journalism, which rented office space there.

I said that the continuing attempts to pressure independent media which provide an outlet for critical voices is censorship and cannot be tolerated. I again called on those responsible to refrain from steps that further endanger media freedom and seriously limit media pluralism.

I expressed concern over the fate of Chernomorskaya company on several occasions, first when the channel's terrestrial broadcasting was cut off in early March and replaced with the channel Rossiya 24 and when the channel was also taken off major cable networks in Crimea, along with a number of Ukrainian channels, at the end of June. (See Regular Report to the Permanent Council of 19 June 2014).

(In the public statement of 8 August the Russian Foreign Ministry said that it was puzzled with the support shown by me to Chernomorskaya TV and expressed regret that I operate on the basis of unverified information, thus lowering the high working standards of my Office.)

I learned that despite considering the accusations unfounded, the station paid all debts and a court in Crimea released the hold on the property on 11 August. However, no equipment was returned to the three organizations.

On 5 August I issued a public statement noting reports that more journalists had gone missing in eastern Ukraine.

According to reports, journalists Sergey Belous with the Serbian weekly Pecat, Roman Gnatyuk of the 112 Ukraina TV channel and freelance journalist Sergey Boyko went missing on 1 August in eastern Ukraine. Yevgeny Shlyakhtin and Yevgeny Tymofeyev, who contributed to various Ukrainian media, went missing on 31 July in the Luhansk region.

I again called on those responsible to immediately release all media members and let them carry out their professional activities.

I expressed concern over injuries suffered by Espresso TV journalist Bianka Zalewska who was seriously hurt on 27 July while covering events in the Luhansk region.

I also noted reports that on 4 August, Mikhail Andreyev, a cameraman for Anna-News, suffered injuries from shrapnel when the crew came under attack in Luhansk.

I was pleased to learn that Belous, Gnatyuk and Boyko were released on 6 August. Shlyakhtin and Tymofeyev reportedly had been released at the end of August.

On 11 August I issued a public statement expressing concern about reports that Andrey Stenin, a photojournalist with the Russian state-run Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, had gone missing on 5 August in eastern Ukraine. I called for Stenin's immediate release.

On 12 August I wrote to the Chair of the Verkhovna Rada Oleksandr Turchynov and issued a public statement expressing concern about a draft law on sanctions pending before the legislature.

The draft law allows the authorities to prohibit or restrict television and radio channel retransmission; restrict or terminate media activities, including the Internet; restrict or

prohibit the production or distribution of printed materials; and restrict or terminate telecommunication services and public telecommunications network usage.

I called on the deputies of the Verkhovna Rada to drop the provisions of the law endangering media freedom and pluralism and running against OSCE commitments on free expression and free media. I said that the national security concerns expressed by the Government in relation to the ongoing conflict should not justify a disproportionate restriction on free expression and free media. The measures included in the draft law represent a clear violation of international standards and thus directly curtail the free flow of information and ideas that lie at the heart of free expression and free media.

I learned that the law went into effect on 12 September. Although most of the provisions concerning free flow of information and free media were lifted, it still allows for restricting or terminating telecommunication services and public telecommunications network usage.

On 13 August I wrote to the authorities conveying concern about a number of attacks on media outlets and violations of journalists' rights across Ukraine.

On 25 July a Molotov cocktail was thrown at the office of the 112 Ukraina TV channel in Kyiv causing property damage; on 3 August, Bogdan Osinsky, a journalist with the Vzglyadiz Odessa news website, was injured in clashes involving police in Odesa; on 5 August Radmela Aliyeva, a journalist with the website Prestupnosti.net, was attacked during a rally in Odesa; on 6 August the editorial office of the Molod Cherkashchyny newspaper in Cherkasy was attacked causing property damage; on 8 August a group of unidentified people obstructed journalist Dmytro Shinkarchuk and photo correspondent Stanislav Baranets with the UNN news agency at the International Convention Center Ukrainian House in Kyiv, demanding that their recordings be erased; and on 10 August a crew of the 1+1 TV channel was obstructed on Independence Square in Kyiv.

I expressed hope that all of these incidents would be given due attention and thoroughly investigated.

On 14 October I received a response from the authorities.

I learned with regret that on **14 August** the General Prosecutor's Office closed an investigation regarding the attack on the acting President of the National Television Company of Ukraine, Aleksandr Panteleymonov, by a group of members of the Ukrainian political party Svoboda, forcing him to resign (See PC report of 19 June 2014). Reportedly, the investigation was closed because Panteleymonov had not filed a proper complaint with police.

On 18 August I issued a public statement expressing concern about the deteriorating media freedom situation in Crimea following the decision of the *de facto* Crimean authorities to ban journalist Ismet Yuksel from entering the peninsula.

On 9 August Yuksel, the General Coordinator of QHA Information Agency and contributor to the Turkish television channel TRT, was barred from entering Crimea for a period of five years. No reasons were given.

I called on those responsible in Crimea to stop intimidating members of the media and refrain from arbitrarily stifling critical voices.

On **19 August** I wrote to Chairman Yuriy Artemenko of the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council expressing concern about some of the National Council's initiatives and proposals, which might have a chilling effect on free media and media pluralism.

I said that the National Council, an institution in charge of broadcasting regulation, should not engage in banning members of the media from crossing national borders.

I also expressed concern about attempts by the National Council to get cable operators to stop the broadcasts of Russian language or Russian produced programmes. Moves by a national authority to ban broadcasts without an adequate and clear legal basis is censorship. I offered my Office's assistance to secure free media in line with OSCE commitments and international standards.

On 10 September Chairman Artemenko responded saying the call to stop retransmission of programmes and channels produced in the Russian Federation was based on their violations of Ukrainian broadcasting law and the European Convention on Transfrontier Television. He said the programs were inciting ethnic hatred, propaganda of exclusivity, superiority or inferiority of people on the grounds of ideology or a particular ethnicity.

On **19 August** I wrote to the authorities and on **20 August** issued a public statement denouncing attacks on media across Ukraine.

On 15 August tents hosting a Spilno TV video-streaming hub at Maidan Square in Kyiv were destroyed. Spilno TV team members Maxim Prasolov, Alexey Isayev and Alexey Poltorak were attacked and suffered concussions and leg injuries. Yuriy Bibik, a journalist with the 112 Ukraina TV channel, reportedly was prohibited from reporting on the incident. Some reports indicate that police who were present at the square failed to respond to the incident.

Lyudmila Voloshina, a journalist with the Iskra Prostykh Lyudei newspaper, allegedly was assaulted on 13 August by Poltava Mayor Oleksandr Mamai and his deputy, Vyacheslav Stetsenko, while she was covering a car accident involving Mamai. Voloshina sustained bruises and her camera was damaged.

I called on the authorities to swiftly investigate these attacks and said that it was unacceptable behavior for police officers and high-ranking officials to contribute to endangering journalists' safety instead of protecting and assisting them.

On **3 September** I issued a public statement mourning the death of Russian photographer Andrei Stenin. I called on the Ukrainian authorities to investigate his death, as well as of all attacks on media. Stenin, a photographer with the state-run Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, was reported missing on 5 August while covering the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine. His remains were discovered later in the month near Snizhne in the Donetsk region.

Following continued intimidation of media, on **5 September** I issued a public statement calling to stop attacks on journalists.

Espresso TV journalist Yegor Vorobyov was abducted near Ilovaisk in the Donetsk region at the end of August. He was reporting from an area surrounded by separatist forces.

Further, freelance journalist Roman Cheremsky was abducted by separatist forces in the Luhansk region on 17 August. His whereabouts remain unknown until now.

I was relieved to learn that journalist Anna Ivanenko and camera operator Nazar Zotsenko, both with 112 Ukraina channel, were released on 3 September after being held for more than two weeks by separatists in the Luhansk region.

I was also pleased to learn that Yegor Vorobyov was released on 7 October.

On 9 September I issued a public statement condemning the continued intimidation of free voices in Crimea following the detention and interrogation of Yelizaveta Bohutskaya, a blogger and contributor to various media outlets, including Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Crimean desk, in Simferopol.

On 8 September law enforcement representatives searched Bohutskaya's apartment and seized equipment and material relating to her work. The blogger was detained for about six hours at the Russian Counter Extremism Centre where police questioned her about reports strongly criticizing the Russian authorities.

I also noted the continued pressure on the Crimean Centre for Investigative Journalism whose staff had been summoned to the Federal Security Service and Prosecutor's Office. Previously, the media outlet's office was raided and later its property seized.

I reiterated my call on the *de facto* authorities in Crimea to refrain from hindering media in doing their work.

On 2 October I received a letter from the Russian authorities informing me that Bohutskaya is a suspect in the case initiated by the Russian Investigative Committee on the charges of committing violence against a representative of authorities. As part of this investigation her apartment was searched and she was interrogated.

On 12 September I issued a public statement calling on the authorities to respect media freedom following a raid by law enforcement officers on the editorial office of Vesti, a newspaper in Kyiv.

On 11 September representatives of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) searched Vesti's editorial office, confiscated equipment and materials as well as journalists' personal belongings. The SBU reportedly conducted the search as part of its criminal investigation into the newspaper's publications, which allegedly contained information infringing Ukraine's territorial integrity.

On 11 September the SBU also searched the Mega Polygraph printing house, where Vesti is printed, which resulted in printing delays.

I again said that national security concerns related to the current challenges should not justify disproportionate restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of the media.

I also expressed concern about reports that the SBU has banned 35 Russian journalists and media functionaries from entering Ukraine at the request of the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine.

On 19 September I issued a public statement expressing concern about the fate of Avdet, the weekly newspaper of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, following acts of intimidation by *de facto* authorities in Crimea.

On 17 September editor Shevket Kaibullayev was given an official warning by the Russian security services (FSB) for “actions that might incite extremist activities.” A day earlier, the paper’s offices in Simferopol were searched and on 18 September the security services reportedly forced all tenants, including Avdet’s staff, to leave their premises. Kaibullayev reportedly received a written warning in June and an oral warning in July related to the newspaper’s reporting.

I said that this hostile behavior against members of the media in Crimea must stop.

I also noted the announcement of national post operator Ukrposhta on 10 September that it was unable to continue deliveries of Ukrainian press publications to subscribers and retail outlets in Crimea due to hurdles created by the *de facto* authorities.

On 25 September in the course of my visit to **Kyiv** to participate in the Global Forum for Media Development’s conference, I met with First Deputy Foreign Minister Nataliia Galibarenko and Chairman of the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine Yuriy Artemenko. Among other things, I discussed the issues related to the safety of journalists, public service broadcasting and banning of media.

I also met with Chief Monitor of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan and discussed ways to enhance co-operation between our offices.

(See Visits)

On 31 October I issued a public statement condemning the abuse of a press insignia in eastern Ukraine. On 30 October Russian actor Mikhail Porechenkov visited Donetsk and was shown on local TV firing a machine gun at Ukrainian positions while wearing a helmet clearly marked with a PRESS insignia.

I said that this abuse puts journalists in conflict zones at grave risk and hurts efforts to protect members of the media. Journalists’ safety is paramount and the use of a PRESS insignia is one of the few measures to ensure their safety in conflict zones.

On 14 November I wrote to the authorities noting a statement issued by the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine on 10 November pointing out that the authorities should help in releasing journalists Serhiy Sakadynskiy (Politika 2.0) and Roman Cheremsky (a freelance journalist from Kharkiv). I expressed hope the authorities would urgently address the cases of these two journalists with due attention.

I also expressed concern about reports that the activists of the Right Sector movement in Kherson have publicly threatened to punish media which disobey their order to repudiate

information about the closure of the movement's branch in Kherson. The threat was posted on 10 November on the "Right Sector Kherson's" page in the social network VKontakte. I called on the authorities to investigate this incident and bring those responsible for such threats against the media representatives to account.

United Kingdom

On **26 September** I issued a public statement calling on the authorities in the UK to re-launch a criminal investigation into the murder of investigative journalist Martin O'Hagan, a reporter for the Sunday World, who was shot in September 2001 while walking with his wife near his home in Lurgan, Northern Ireland. No one has been charged with the murder. In seeking to start a new investigation, I said that the failure to prosecute can create an environment of impunity for those who might attack journalists. The Sunday World, the National Union of Journalists and Mike Nesbitt, a journalist who is now leader of the Ulster Unionist Party are also calling for a new investigation.

On **29 October** I visited the U.K. and met with Joyce Anne Anelay, Baroness Anelay of St Johns, Foreign Office Minister for Human Rights and International Organisations, to discuss media freedom issues across the OSCE region, such as the need to improve the situation surrounding the safety of journalists and media legislation. I also raised the issue of recent revelations that police have been obtaining journalists phone records in the UK without court order, which I said goes against the fundamental right of confidentiality of reporters' sources. I noted the swift response from civil society and politicians and condemnation of these actions, as well as bringing legislation forward to prevent similar actions.

I also stressed that human rights, especially freedom of expression and freedom of the media, must be at the top of the agenda when governments deal with sensitive issues such as the fight against terrorism and extremism.

While at the FCO I also spoke to ministry officials on the implications of the Ukraine crisis on freedom of expression.

(See Visits)

United States

On **14 August** I issued a public statement indicating the arrests of two reporters covering civil disturbances in Ferguson, Missouri, was a clear violation of the right of the media to report news. Washington Post reporter Wesley Lowrey and Huffington Post reporter Ryan J. Reilly were taken into custody while filing reports with their employers on demonstrations triggered by a police shooting. I said that summarily rounding up journalists while they are doing their jobs sets a dangerous precedent.

On **19 August** I issued another public statement on events in suburban St. Louis in light of reports that three additional journalists were arrested while covering civil disturbances. Getty Images photojournalist Scott Olson was taken in, as well as German journalists Ansgar Graw and Frank Herrmann. They were released without being charged with crimes.

I stated that while I fully recognized the sensitive situation in the area, the right of media to cover public protests must be taken into account when law enforcement officials are maintaining public order. Journalists should not be intimidated by police.

Overall, at least 11 journalists were detained in some fashion covering the events, in addition to the ones above, they include Robert Klemko of Sports Illustrated; Rob Crilly of The Telegraph; Neil Munshi of the Financial Times, Kerry Pickett of Breitbart News, Ryan Devereaux of The Intercept and Coulter Loeb of The Cincinnati Herald.

Uzbekistan

On **8 September** I issued a public statement regarding recent amendments to the law “On informatization.” I said that the amendments further limit free expression and free media by introducing a broad definition of the term blogger and imposing a wide array of sanctions, including a ban on untrue posts and reposts. Bloggers now have an obligation to report only verified and truthful information and to remove posts upon demand of government authorities or face website blocking and administrative liability.

I noted that the restrictions are far more limiting than could be allowed and they violate OSCE commitments and international standards on free media and free expression.

I also used the opportunity to call for the release from prison of Solijon Abdurakhmanov, Dilmurod Saiid and Hairullo Khamidov.

On 31 October I received a reply from the authorities indicating that the definition of a blogger was included in the amendments to the information law because people who use the Internet were subject to media laws. They also pointed to similar regulations in Germany, Russia and the United States.

I was informed that the amendments would not violate free media principles and were intended to ensure the rule of law and protection of human rights.

On **4 July** I wrote to Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov to convey my concern about a fine levied against Said Abdurakhimov, a journalist for ferganane.ws. On 28 June he was fined 9.6 million soms by a court in Tashkent for the administrative offenses of "Carrying out activities without a license and other permits" and for "Creation or possession of materials with the aim to distribute them, containing a threat to public security and public order."

Abdurakhimov had been reporting critically on the local authorities' compensation policies for families whose houses were to be removed because of road construction plans.

I expressed my concern that working as a journalist should not be subject to a special license or *per se* cause a threat to public security and public order.

On 10 September I received a reply stating that the court determined Abdurakhimov had carried out interviews to gather materials that constituted a threat for public order and had the intent to cause panic among dwellers without identifying himself as a journalist. The authorities said the district court judgment had been affirmed by an appeals court.

Communiqués and other documents issued

On **7 October** I issued a Communiqué on the impact of laws countering extremism on freedom of expression and freedom of the media. I set forth principles that should be observed when participating States attempt to respond to extremist threats:

- Anti-extremism laws only should restrict activities which necessarily and directly imply the use of violence.
- Limits to free expression and free media imposed by anti-extremism laws should respect OSCE commitments and international law, notably article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- Hate speech can be addressed if it directly incites to violence and leads to hate crimes, particularly targeting minorities and other vulnerable groups.

I said that mere expression of controversial and provocative political views must therefore be respected and protected as part of pluralistic and democratic debates. I also said, *inter alia*,

that it is dangerous to empower public officials such as prosecutors or police officers to define an extremist act and exert leverage on the judicial system to impose their understanding of these “crimes against the State.”

The Communiqué is available here: <http://www.osce.org/fom/125186>.

Projects and activities since the last report

Activities with international organizations

UNHRC resolution on journalists’ safety

Following my participation in a high-level panel discussion on journalists’ safety at the 26th Session of the UN Human Rights Council on 11 June 2014, on **29 September** on the occasion of the adoption of a new resolution by the United Nations Human Rights Council on the issue of journalists’ safety, I issued a public statement commending the action, calling it “...an important step forward toward a proper safeguard of journalists’ safety against all forms of attacks and violence. It reiterates and reinforces previous statements made by several national and international bodies. It is urgent that States take note of this resolution and adopt all the measures and decisions to promote a safe and enabling environment for media and journalists, as well as ensure accountability for all those involved in these unacceptable acts.”

The resolution, sponsored by the Republic of Austria, called on states to “promote a safe and enabling environment for journalists to perform their work independently” and to fight impunity by ensuring “impartial, speedy and effective investigations” into acts of violence against journalists.”

On **17 September** I participated with a written address in a high-level panel discussion convened by Article 19 on protection of journalists during the UN Human Rights Council’s session.

Joint Statement on stronger protection of journalists covering conflicts

On **1 September** I launched a joint statement with three international freedom of expression rapporteurs, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression David Kaye; The Organization of American States Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, Catalina Botero Marino; and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information Faith Pansy Tlakula.

The Joint Statement is available here: <http://www.osce.org/fom/123084>.

UN counter-terrorism workshop

On **9-11 July** my Office participated in a regional workshop in **Bishkek** on the media's role in counter-terrorism, organized by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia and the Transnational Threats Department of the OSCE.

The workshop brought together security sector representatives, law enforcement agents and media experts from all five Central Asian countries, as well as members of regional and international organizations and institutions to discuss media strategies used by terrorists, choices and responsibilities of the media, political and legal responses and options for co-operation. The workshop also included capacity-building training for representatives of the media and government press agencies, including topics such as developing counter narratives, reporting on victims and preparing and dealing with the stress and trauma of reporting on terrorism.

UN anti-corruption conference

On **9 September** my Office participated in a panel discussion on the importance of access to information in fighting corruption in **Vienna** organized by the UN Convention against Corruption Coalition.

CoE experts committee on journalists' safety

On **6 October** the Principal Adviser of my Office participated in a meeting of the Committee of Experts on protections of journalism and safety of journalists held in **Strasbourg** and organized by the Council of Europe.

UN/CoE protection of journalists' seminar

On **3 November** the Director of my Office spoke at the "Seminar and Inter-regional Dialogue on the protection of journalists in the European Court of Human Rights" held in **Strasbourg** and organized by the Council of Europe, UNESCO, the Centre for Freedom of the Media and the European Lawyers Union.

UN/CoE journalists' safety meeting

On **4 November** I spoke at the 3rd UN Inter-Agency Meeting on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity at the Council of Europe in **Strasbourg**. The meeting was convened by UNESCO and co-hosted by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Council of Europe.

CoE steering committee meeting

On **18-21 November** my Principal Adviser participated as an observer in the 7th meeting of the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI) in **Strasbourg** to discuss Council of Europe actions to strengthen the protection of free expression and human rights of Internet users.

UNCAC Access to Information and Technical Assistance

On **9 September** my Office participated in a panel discussion on the importance of access to information in fighting corruption in **Vienna** organized by the UN Convention against Corruption Coalition.

Legal reviews

Austria

On **21 July** I presented to the authorities a legal review commissioned by my Office regarding two proposals on access to information.

The legal review was carried out by Professor Bernd Holznel, Director of the Institute for Information, Telecommunication and Media Law at the University of Münster, and an expert on European public law and media regulation and freedom of information legislation. He found that both amendments were well grounded but suffer from a lack of specificity that could lead to an erosion of the rights and obligations sought as well as uneven application across the federal states.

I expressed hope that the recommendations could contribute to the discussion on these comprehensive reforms with the aim to ensure free flow of information in accordance with international standards and OSCE commitments.

The review recommends:

- to formulate more precise constitutional requirements that ensure laws or regulations implementing the amendment would, indeed, meet the desired goal of simplifying and widening access to information;
- that the amendment should require the immediate processing of requests;
- to require that original documents be made available;
- that reasons for denial of requests be narrowly drawn and stated clearly;
- that a proportionality standard be implemented which would balance the public's right to know with administrative burdens and security concerns; and
- to introduce an independent commissioner on access to information to watch over access rights and develop related implementation standards.

The review is available at <https://www.osce.org/de/fom/126716>.

Visits and participation in events

On **20 June** I travelled to **Brussels** to address the EU Council Working Party on the Council of Europe and the OSCE. This provided an opportunity to discuss with representatives from the EU capitals issues that I have raised both in the EU Member States and the rest of the OSCE region. Some of the key issues included the conflict in Ukraine, the safety of journalists, propaganda and freedom of expression online. While in Brussels I also met with officials in the European Commission Directorate General for Competition on ways to strengthen co-operation.

On **30 June** the Director of my Office participated in an international workshop on the “Measureability of Diversity in Press and Broadcasting” in **Berlin** organized by Westfälische Wilhelms Universität Münster. The workshop identified and examined common criteria for a framework of free and independent media.

On **30 June – 2 July** the Principal Adviser of my Office participated in the Annenberg-Oxford Media Policy Summer Institute in **Oxford**, organized by the Center for Global Communication Studies at the Annenberg School for Communications of the University of Pennsylvania and lectured on international standards on freedom of expression and freedom of the media. A member of the staff took part in the Institute.

On **1-2 July** I paid an official visit to **Montenegro** and met with President Filip Vujanović, Prime Minister Milo Đukanović and the president of the Supreme Court, Vesna Medenica. I also met with Igor Lukšić, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Raško Konjević, Minister of Interior, members of the Parliament, civil society, journalists and media representatives. In my meetings I said that I remain concerned about the lack of progress in investigations into attacks on journalists and about the lack of unity among members of the media in the country. While some progress has been made, most notably by establishing a commission to monitor investigations of cases of threats and attacks against journalists, this cannot act as a substitute for authorities and institutions in investigating and prosecuting perpetrators and masterminds of the attacks.

On **3-4 July** together with the 2014 Swiss Chairmanship and ODIHR, my Office organized the second Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting of the year, “Promotion of freedom of expression: rights, responsibilities and OSCE commitments.”

The event in **Vienna** provided an important forum for OSCE institutions, participating States, field operations and international organizations and civil society to review the current status of freedom of expression in the OSCE region. Recalling the numerous OSCE commitments in the field of freedom of expression and media freedom, the event focused on efforts required by the legislative, executive and judicial branches of governments, local and regional authorities, media NGOs, journalists and other segments of civil society to ensure that freedom of expression, both online and in traditional media, is protected and strengthened. In the discussions of the three working sessions participants identified specific challenges and threats to freedom of expression and shared good practices to strengthen this fundamental right.

On **8 July** the Principal Adviser of my Office lectured on “International standards on freedom of expression and the role of the Representative on Freedom of the Media” at Central European University in **Budapest**.

On **15-17 July** as a follow-up to the official visit I returned to **Montenegro** on to discuss ways to strengthen self-regulation with owners, managers and editors from local media outlets: the Pobjeda, Dan, Vijesti and Dnevne Novine newspapers; the Monitor weekly; the portals Analitika, Cafemontenegro and PCNEN, as well as the Secretary General of the Media Council for Self-regulation. We agreed on the urgent need to rebuild trust in the media community by working on a set of common professional interests and respect for ethical standards and basic journalistic principles. It was agreed that the next meeting to discuss the principles of self-regulation and an action plan would take place in autumn at my Office.

On **23 July** I participated in a debate “European scenario and Italy pending reform” at the Court of Justice in **Rome**, organized by the Order of Advocates of Rome and the National Council of the Order of Journalists of Italy, on amendments to Law No. 925 on defamation. The debate was prompted by the approval of the draft law by the Justice Commission of the Senate. I pointed out the shortcomings of the draft law and called on the authorities again to fully decriminalize defamation.

On **24 July** I met with Msgr. Paul Tighe, Secretary of the Council for Social Communication, in the **Vatican City** to discuss issues of mutual interest.

On **6-8 August** the OSCE Mission in Skopje and my Office organized a second workshop for the Council of Media Ethics, held in **Skopje**, to discuss their strategy and action plan.

On **13 August** I spoke at the European Law Student Association Summer Law School in **Sarajevo** on media freedom issues across the OSCE region.

On **2-5 September** my Office participated in the Ninth annual Internet Governance Forum in **Istanbul** with the theme of “Connecting Continents for Enhanced Multistakeholder Internet Governance was the topic discussed.

On **2-3 September** my Office took part in the 2014 South Caucasus Regional Meeting of OSCE Heads of Field Operations in **Yerevan**.

On **3 September** the Principal Adviser of my Office participated in a roundtable discussion in **Vienna** on the challenges to press freedom and media independence in Egypt organized by the International Press Institute.

On **9 September** my Office participated in a panel discussion on the importance of access to information in fighting corruption in **Vienna** organized by the UN Convention against Corruption Coalition.

On **9 September** my Office took part in the 2014 Eastern Europe Regional Meeting of OSCE Heads of Field Operations in **Kyiv**.

On **22-23 September** I addressed the opening plenary session of the 2014 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in **Warsaw** and I introduced a working session. I summarized my Office’s work over the past year and discussed the areas that will receive most of our attention in the coming months. The session provided an important forum to discuss the major threats to freedom of expression with the active participation of the representatives of civil society and delegations of participating States.

I emphasized that media freedom is vital to every one of us, because it is through the work of journalists that we get information about issues that directly affect our lives; that this freedom is not to be taken for granted and, once given up, it is difficult to regain. I said that each year journalists put themselves in grave danger while they provide information to the rest of us, and some of them lose their life while doing so; and that impunity of perpetrators of violence against journalists has become the norm, and successful and transparent investigations remain occasional. I also repeated that much of the danger and limitations that journalists face come from government policies themselves, and that without resolute political will by the governments to protect free expression, our right to free speech will further suffer.

At the session I also drew attention to the fact that the types of assault on free expression, as well as the lack of physical and legal safety for journalists, have also remained similar over these five years and they fall in these main categories: violence and threats of violence against journalists, and impunity of perpetrators; legislative restrictions leading to the obstruction of freedom of expression both offline and online; and limitations to the rights of journalists.

I noted with concern that this year my Office has witnessed propaganda as a tool of warfare dominating the landscape, as well as an extraordinary frequency and scope of assaults against journalists, matched with the continued lack of consolidated efforts by the OSCE participating States' governments to value and protect their work.

On **23 September** the Principal Adviser of my Office participated as a panellist and expert on the main challenges facing the Romanian press at an international media conference in **Bucharest** organized by the South East Europe Media Organization.

On **24 September** I delivered the opening statement and participated in the Eurasia Forum for Media Development conference in **Kyiv** on the development of independent media in the digital age in Eurasia organized by the Global Forum for Media Development.

On **30 September – 1 October** I delivered the keynote speech at the 80th PEN International Congress in **Bishkek** and participated in a panel discussion on criminal defamation organized by the Writers in Prison Committee of PEN International. On this occasion I also met with the heads of the parliamentary committees on Education, Science, Religion and Sport and on Human Rights, Constitutional Legislation and State Structure to discuss recent legislative initiatives of the Kyrgyz Parliament.

On **1 October** my Office participated in the Russian Union of Journalists 18th festival in **Sochi**.

On **2-3 October** my Office took part in the Journalism Festival “All Russia – 2014” in **Dagomys, Krasnodar region**, at the invitation of the Russian Union of Journalists.

On **6 October** the Principal Adviser of my Office participated in a meeting of the Committee of Experts on protections of journalism and safety of journalists held in **Strasbourg** and organized by the Council of Europe.

On **7-8 October** I held a second workshop on ethics with media representatives of Montenegro in **Skopje** as a first step to improve media self-regulation in the country.

On **9 October** I participated in the International Institute of Communications Annual Conference in **Vienna** centered on the issue of “Trends in Global Communications: Breaking down silos to embrace convergence” and was a keynote speaker on the topic “Data protection, cyber security and human rights: Balancing and managing policy responses, network operator responsibilities and risks.”

On **9 October** my Office took part in the roundtable discussion “Practical Mechanisms for Cooperation between Law Enforcement and Media Professionals in Times of Crisis” in **Odessa** organized by the OSCE Project Coordinator in Ukraine.

On **13 October** I hosted and organized a roundtable discussion in **Vienna** with media representatives in Montenegro designed to improve self-regulation and begin the process of confidence-building among members of the media.

On **17-18 October** the Principal Adviser of my Office participated in a conference in **Milan** organized by the Università Bocconi on Internet law and protection of fundamental rights and spoke on the role of the Representative’s Office and the European Court of Human Rights in the protection of free expression.

On **17 October** my Office addressed the annual congress of the Association European Journalists in **Neusiedl am See**. The main issues under discussion were journalists’ safety and media freedom in the OSCE region, with a special focus on the situation in Ukraine.

On **20 October** I sent a video message to the public hearing on the media freedom in Hungary held at the European Parliament in **Strasbourg**.

On **29 October** my Office attended the conference in **Vilnius** “Television and Radio: Current challenges,” organized by the Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania. The conference brought together regulators of audiovisual media, media law experts and the media from Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland and Ukraine. The aim of the conference was to encourage co-operation between countries and different authorities, to share opinions, experiences and insights and look for methods for the prevention of possible propaganda of a foreign country within the sector of electronic media. The conference offered an opportunity to present my Communique of 16 May on propaganda in times of conflict.

On **29 October** in **London** I met with the United Kingdom Foreign Office Minister for Human Rights and International Organisations, Baroness Anelay and other senior officials to discuss media freedom issues in the UK and the OSCE region.

We exchanged views on media issues in the United Kingdom, journalists’ safety and media legislation across the OSCE region. I said there is a pressing need to address and improve these issues in several OSCE participating States. With regard to the United Kingdom, recent revelations that the police have been obtaining journalists’ telephone records to identify confidential sources without judicial oversight are troublesome. This contravenes one of the fundamental elements of free media, confidentiality of sources.

On **3 November** the Director of my Office spoke at the “Seminar and Inter-regional Dialogue on the protection of journalists in the European Court of Human Rights” held in **Strasbourg** and organized by the Council of Europe, UNESCO, the Centre for Freedom of the Media and the European Lawyers Union.

On **3-4 November** my Office participated in the international symposium in **Vienna** “Enhancing Women's Share in Peace and Security” and spoke on the panel on "Information Gathering and Priorities for Action – the Role of the Media." The conference was organized by the Austrian Parliament, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports, the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, the Austrian Development Cooperation, the Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue, the Austrian Federal Chancellery, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education and Women’s Affairs, the International Peace Institute, the Diplomatic Academy Vienna and the UN Women National Committee Austria.

On **4 November** I spoke at the 3rd UN Inter-Agency Meeting on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity at the Council of Europe in **Strasbourg**. The meeting was convened by UNESCO and co-hosted by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Council of Europe.

On **10 November** my Office participated in a training organized by the OSCE Centre in **Astana** and the NGO Adilsoz in Almaty discussing new media-related provisions of the Penal Code and the Code of Administrative Offenses and their implications for members of the media.

On **10 November** the Director of my Office delivered a public lecture at the University of **Graz** on the consequences of the fall of the Iron Curtain for human rights in Eastern Europe.

On **12-13 November** the Director of my Office participated in the civil society conference and the High-Level Commemorative Event on the 10th anniversary of the OSCE **Berlin** Conference on Anti-Semitism.

On **13 November** I delivered the keynote address in **Budapest** at the international conference “Bridging the Digital Divide” organized by SEE TV-WEB.

On **13 November** my Office spoke in **Vienna** at the Fourth Aspire Congress about the work of the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

On **17 November** I spoke at the **Wilton Park** conference “Privacy, security and surveillance: tackling international dilemmas and dangers in the digital realm.”

On **17-18 November** my Office participated in the conference “The abuse of defamation laws in Croatia – Defense strategies for journalists and lawyers” on the impact of defamation laws on media freedom in **Zagreb** organized by the International Press Institute, the Media Legal Defence Initiative and the Croatian Journalists’ Association.

On **18 November** the Principal Adviser to my Office participated in the 7th meeting of the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society in **Strasbourg** to discuss Council of Europe actions to strengthen the protection of free expression and human rights of Internet users.

On **18 November** my Office participated in a conference on “Further strengthening the guarantees of freedom of the media in the framework of the economic market and within a competitive information world” in **Tashkent** organized by the Foundation for the Support of

Printed Media and Information Agencies of Uzbekistan and the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan.

On **19 November** my Office participated in the EU – Tajikistan Civil Society Seminar on Freedom of Media which examined key political, social and legal factors affecting free expression and free media and ways to promote access to information and safeguard fundamental human rights in the country.

On **19-21 November** I visited **Moscow** to participate in the annual meeting of the European Federation of Journalists at which I delivered a keynote speech.

In the course of the visit I met with editors of independent media outlets: Mikhail Zygar with the television channel Dozhd, Dmitry Muratov with the Novaya Gazeta newspaper, and Aleksey Venediktov with the radio station Echo Moscow. I also met with other civil society representatives at a roundtable “New Internet-related legislation in Russia as it relates to bloggers and online media” organized at the Moscow State University School of Journalism.

On 21 November I participated in and delivered a keynote speech in **Moscow** at the annual meeting of the European Federation of Journalists.

On **21-23 November** my Office will participate in the conference “Gaining a Digital Edge: Journalists, Watchdogs and Freedom of Expression (2.0)” in **Budapest** organized by the School of Public Policy’s Center for Media, Data and Society, OSCE and the SHARE Foundation.

On **25 November** my Office will participate in a conference on “Terrorism and the Internet” organized by the Committee for Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Culture and the OSCE Centre in **Astana**. The event explored terrorism and counter-terrorism on the Internet.

On **25 November** the Director of my Office spoke at an international conference in **Bratislava** “Freedom of Media 25 years after: A need to remove legal obstacles” where participants will discuss decriminalization of defamation, damage awards and the regulation of fines in EU member states. The conference is organized by Slovak Committee of the International Press Institute, the Institute for Public Affairs and the Bratislava City Council.

Training

Workshop on the interaction between law enforcement and media

On **15 September** my Office organized a workshop in **Minsk** on the interaction between law enforcement and media. Approximately 20 representatives of Belarusian law enforcement agencies, state media and private media learned about the Belarusian legal framework and the specifics of each other’s work. A consultant on journalism safety and conflict-sensitive journalism, Susanna Inkinen, and the Acting Head Strategic Police Matters Unit at OSCE, Marco Kubny, shared their experiences on international standards and best practices. They suggested specific steps to prevent and resolve conflicts.

Conferences

Roundtable discussions between Ukrainian and Russian media trade unions

On **19 May, 27 June** and **26 September** my Office organized three roundtable discussions among a dozen senior representatives of the Russian Union of Journalists, Independent Media Trade Union of Ukraine, and the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine. Participants discussed ways to improve journalists' professional standards and safety in Ukraine. Topics also included common monitoring of journalists' rights violations, promotion of respect of ethical standards and the issue of propaganda in the media.

Representatives of the European Federation of Journalists, the International Press Institute and Reporters without Borders also participated in the meetings.

As a result of each roundtable, the representatives successively adopted three documents:

- Memorandum on the situation in and around Ukraine, available at: <http://www.osce.org/node/118692>;
- Action Plan to improve media freedom situation in and around Ukraine, available at: <http://www.osce.org/fom/120451>;
- Common statement condemning the incidents of killing, beating and detention of journalists in the zone of armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, available at: <http://www.osce.org/fom/124537>.

Open Journalism

On **19 September** my office held the second expert meeting on Open Journalism in **Vienna** focusing on the issues of legal implications of Open Journalism, protection of media freedom online and how the new voices of Open Journalism are recognized and safeguarded as basic human rights.

Online media covers a wide range of formats and languages. Today the Internet provides easy access to electronic or online-only versions of traditional print and broadcast media, as well as emerging New Media based on different and more participative forms of expression. Even in the case of traditional media, the Internet offers a method of distribution which enables complementary and more interactive platforms to facilitate access to information and resources as well as an easily accessible framework for dialogue between media outlets and consumers.

This new framework, or Open Journalism, has to be considered, of course, in light of already existing rights and other legal provisions in the field of free expression and media freedom. While technological changes mean that journalism and media are irreversibly changing, our basic human rights remain the same.

The latest expert debate on Open Journalism focused on how traditional and well-established media laws should be applied or re-interpreted to protect innovative contributions and media plurality.

The conclusion to this session is that the new participants in journalism act as public watchdogs and contribute to a free and open society and accountable systems of government.

Any regulations must safeguard freedom of expression to ensure that the Internet remains an open platform for free flow of information and ideas.

Freedom of expression is a universal human right, the new media actors need to enjoy at least some of the protection and privileges that were in the past only granted to traditional media such as the protection of sources and the pre-publication process, presentational and editorial freedom, perishability of news and others.

Online content should be dealt with as any other form of expression therefore there is no need to create new principles to deal with illegal or problematic content.

The next meeting on Open Journalism is planned for Spring 2015.

11th South Caucasus Media Conference

On **10-11 November** my Office held the 11th South Caucasus Media Conference in **Tbilisi** for more than 60 participants representing media, government and civil society from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Public service broadcasting in the digital age was the focus of the conference. Participants also discussed the latest media freedom developments in the region. Four international experts on public service broadcasting from Belgium, Latvia, Switzerland and the United Kingdom were invited to talk about the current challenges, opportunities and strategic dilemmas public service broadcasters are facing in relation to financing, governance, management and content.

Participants adopted a list of recommendations to support the further development of PSB in the region. It is available at <https://www.osce.org/fom/126986>.

Planned activities for the next reporting period

Conferences

Roundtable discussions

On **11 December** my Office will organize the 4th roundtable discussion in **Vienna** between Ukrainian and Russian media trade unions.

On **18 December** my Office will hold a one-day conference in **Vienna** to improve awareness and understanding of the relationship between freedom of expression and tolerance and non-discrimination and stimulate a debate on this issue among the participating States of the OSCE. The event is made possible by extra-budgetary contributions from Norway, Turkey and the United States.

Extra-budgetary donors

I would like to thank the governments of Azerbaijan, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States for funding projects, training and media conferences during this reporting period.

I encourage all participating States to consider supporting my Office's effort to provide classes and regional meetings to improve the media landscape.