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Statement in response to the biannual report of the
Representative of the Freedom of the Media

Delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 19 May 2022

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

I would like to welcome the Representative of the Freedom of the Media, Teresa Ribeiro, back to the Council. Norway considers freedom of expression and media freedom to be cornerstones of any democratic and pluralistic society, and crucial for our common security. These freedoms are however under severe pressure in the OSCE region, and we appreciate that Ms. Ribeiro's report points to concrete challenges.

There is a saying that "in war, truth is the first casualty". Journalists and media workers in and around Ukraine are playing a crucial role in ensuring that reliable information about Russia's aggression in Ukraine reaches the public. Independent news reporting shows us the terrible impact of the war, and it helps mobilize public and political support for responses to the crisis. We would have wished for more independent quality journalism to reach the public in all of our region, including within Russia.

As pointed out by the Representative, journalists and media workers have been killed while reporting in Ukraine. We echo her tribute to these brave individuals, and offer our sincere condolences to their families, friends, and colleagues. It is extremely worrying to hear how Russian forces intentionally target media and internet infrastructure.

Attacks against journalists both online and offline is representing an increasing trend where independent voices are silenced. Moreover, women journalists and media workers are particularly vulnerable to violence, offline and online. We applaud the work of the RFoM to combat such violence, as part of the work to

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ensure safety of all journalists.

We appreciate Ms. Ribeiro's focus on increasing pressure on journalists and media workers through the use of existing national laws and regulations vague enough that they can be misused to suppress media freedom. We agree that countries must assess laws and regulations on "misinformation" introduced during the pandemic to ensure that they pose no threat to media freedom.

Mr. Chair,

Whereas the situation for the media is worse in some participating states than in others, Ms. Ribeiro's report bears testimony that we all have a job to do. We cannot tolerate attacks on media freedom. Not anywhere. All states must ensure that their laws, policies, and practices do not harm journalists' and media workers' abilities to perform their job.

Norway remains committed to the protection of journalists and media workers and to the promotion of press freedom in conflict situations and war.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank Ms. Ribeiro and her staff for the extremely valuable work they are doing in assisting states in ensuring media freedom. You have Norway's continued support.

Thank you.