



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

**Statement
in response to the Report by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media,
Ms Teresa Ribeiro**

As delivered by Ambassador Yevhenii Tsymbaliuk,
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1374th meeting of the Permanent Council,
19 May 2022

Mr Chairperson,

While aligning with the statement earlier delivered by the EU delegation, I wish to make some remarks in my national capacity.

We welcome Representative on Freedom of the Media, Madam Teresa Ribeiro, back to the Permanent Council and thank her for her comprehensive report.

Ukraine fully supports the Mandate of the Representative on Freedom of the Media and as this year marks its 25th Anniversary, the slogan - “There is no security without media freedom” is as relevant as ever, in light of the existing and emerging threats to the freedom of expression and media freedom throughout the OSCE region.

Madam Representative,

We have studied your Report and completely share the view that censorship, regress in media freedom and isolation of people from seeking and receiving information is totally unacceptable and should be tolerated nowhere across the OSCE region and beyond.

Regrettably, since 2014, the territories of Ukraine, temporarily occupied by russia, have been facing constant threat of destroying freedom of speech and cutting off people from the Ukrainian information space. And on 24 February 2022, a new phase of brutal repressions against independent journalists and media outlets began.

In an attempt to completely suppress freedom of speech the russian forces are deliberately targeting Ukraine’s media and internet infrastructure with cyberattacks, striking of TV towers in our cities with the only aim to stop broadcasting of the Ukrainian news channels and their replacement by the russian sources of disinformation and propaganda.

The consequences of such propaganda can be clearly seen in russia, where state-controlled media are deceiving the society about what they call “a special military operation” in an attempt to justify the russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Harmful practice of labelling independent media and journalists as “foreign agents” is underway. It has even gone further now, with russia making it mandatory that all media use only information from russian official sources when reporting on the war in Ukraine, and

introducing criminal liability and imprisonment of up to fifteen years for spreading so-called “fake” information about its armed forces and the war in Ukraine.

Such flagrant violations of the OSCE principles and commitments regarding media freedom should not be overlooked and need our common adequate response. In this respect, we welcome the decision of our partners, who have already contributed to combating such propaganda and fake news distribution, including by prohibition of broadcasting russian propaganda outlets on their territories.

Madam Representative,

Ukraine fully echoes your stance regarding the utmost importance to keep receiving reliable information from independent media workers on the ground.

Regrettably, the russian war has a direct detrimental impact on exercising by journalists and other media workers of their rights. Recent Report under the OSCE’s Moscow Mechanism displays facts of various attacks on journalists, including arbitrary arrests, abductions, intimidation and other ill-treatments that amount to torture. We are particularly concerned that civic journalists together with other activists are among main targets of the russian occupiers in the temporarily besieged Ukrainian cities. More than eight years we have been witnessing the same brutal attack on the freedom of speech in the temporarily occupied Crimea, where journalists have been under constant persecution and threats in order to suppress any attempt to oppose legitimacy of occupation or spread the truth about the mass violations of human rights in Crimea.

In almost three months of the russia’s full-scale invasion, according to the information available, 27 journalists have been killed in Ukraine.

We commend courage and devotion of many Ukrainian and foreign journalists. Without their professionalism the world wouldn’t have known the truth about war crimes russia is committing in Ukraine.

We therefore encourage you, Madam Representative, to continue maintaining strong focus on the cases of targeting both Ukrainian and foreign journalists, holding them hostage and subjecting to physical and mental violence and use all available instruments in line with your mandate to address these utterly unacceptable practices.

Madam Representative,

We have taken note of the point raised in your Report with regard to restrictions in media freedom in the national context.

We have earlier provided you with the explanation of some necessary measures taken to stop consistent and systematic spreading of false information and misleading narratives, undermining democracy, discrediting reforms in Ukraine and aimed at posing artificial division of the Ukrainian society. The measures introduced were in no way directed against the journalists and freedom of speech, but to protect and preserve Ukrainian information space from massive flows of disinformation, coming from russia’s propaganda news sources.

As freedom of speech is widely seen as a core Ukrainian value, please, be assured that Ukraine will spare no effort in further taking steps to strengthening media literacy in the society and ensuring pluralistic media.

Madam Representative,

We commend your efforts aimed at not leaving overlooked serious concerns about the safety of journalists and media freedom in the OSCE region and in particular your attention to the current deteriorating situation in Ukraine due to the Russian war.

We value your work in spotlighting cases of shrinking media space, threats and acts of violence against journalists and other media professionals, including your messages in social media, press-releases and statements, notably the recent one issued together with your colleagues from Abuja, Geneva and Washington that provides a clear-cut analysis of Russia's illegal actions, including spreading of disinformation and incitement to violence and hate speech. Your clear position on this matter contributes to ensuring more media freedom and safety of journalists in order that they can perform their professional duties, in particular in such challenging times.

In conclusion, let me once again thank you and your team for all the important work done. You can always count on our support and cooperation.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.