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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA TO THE UN,
OSCE AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA

Statement by Permanent Representative of Latvia in reply to the Russian Federation on World Press Freedom Day

Permanent Council No.1265,
Vienna, 30 April 2020

Mr Chairman,

It was not my intention to take floor today, but I have to react to the intervention of our distinguished Russian colleague.

Mr Chairman,

Latvia values rule of law. Everyone is operating in the same legal framework. Irrespective to language you use. It applies to visa policy and sanctions law, for example.

All media in Latvia also operate in the same economic framework, the same market and tax realm etc.. For years markets shift from traditional media to digital and more flexible solutions. Within last half year another TV channel, broadcasting in Latvian, closed their news programs. A major Latvian language newspaper has recently taken decision to abandon the printed version and move to the web-version only.

In current crisis of Covid-19 the Government is considering support to media sector. Irrelevant of content.

The legislation proposals mentioned here are, for time being, just proposals. There is no final decision yet. And they are targeted at enriching the media space. Not at closing someone, but giving more room for diversity. Nobody is against diversity of media space, I guess. Or as we see- some are.

By the way, may I remind that for years Latvia hosts the base of Russian web-based media outlet *Meduza*. Just today another Russian web-based media of investigative journalism *Vazhniye Istorii* is opening its base in Riga. No doubt, Riga is a nice place to be. Those Russian media appreciate rule of law and media freedom environment in Latvia. But still, the main reasons for them operating from Latvia are concerns about rule of law and restrictions to media freedom in Russia itself.

Therefore, examples used by our Russian colleague in regards to my country are clearly misleading here in this context.

Mr Chairman, last but not least.

The World Press Freedom Index is freely accessible to anyone on the web. Everyone speaking and listening can easily check who is who on issue of media freedom.

I thank you.