

Thank you Mr/Madam Chairperson

The promotion and protection of human rights is at the heart of UK foreign policy, and we pursue every opportunity to promote and protect these rights around the world.

The United Kingdom is a strong supporter of the tireless work of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and her outstanding staff in providing early warning of violations of media freedom throughout the OSCE region. The United Kingdom is not immune from receiving comments, concerns and requests from the RFOM's Office, and we urge all participating States to co-operate with and use the expertise of her office in upholding their commitments.

With the proliferation of people connected to the Internet, digital technology has rapidly become a key medium to exercise freedom of expression and to realise other human rights. It is increasingly fundamental to a healthy civil society and to democratic participation.

But the rise of the networked world has also produced significant challenges which could undermine these benefits and pose a serious threat to reaping the full potential of cyberspace. The UK joined the Freedom Online Coalition because we believe it is vital to work with other countries to build a wider consensus about the importance of human rights online and to guard against the growing trend of the use of the Internet as a means of political repression.

Freedom of expression and a free media cuts to the very heart of the debate about the future of cyberspace. All the participating States represented here today have freely signed up to existing OSCE media freedom commitments it is therefore inherent upon all States to ensure that these rights are not violated.

Our networked world belongs to no one person or group, but transcends the geography, politics, and the special interests of individual countries. It is therefore right that governments, civil society and business work together to protect human rights online, and that governments ensure that the rule of law is at the heart of any decisions that affect our human rights, offering redress if mistakes are made.

Finally, Mr/Madam Chairperson, we would like to express our full support for the Irish Chairmanship's intention to work towards a Ministerial Decision on media freedom in Dublin. Hardly a day goes by when the RFOM does not feel compelled to highlight freedom of expression violations. The participating States need to respond to the deeply troubling trend which sees continuing violence against journalists. We fully support the notion that all human rights should apply with equal force online as they do in the off line world and would support its inclusion in a Ministerial Decision.

