



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

**Vilnius Recommendations on Safety of Journalists
8 June 2011**

On the occasion of the Conference on Safety of Journalists, held in Vilnius on 7 – 8 June 2011,

- the Lithuanian Chairmanship of the OSCE, together with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media -

Underscoring the indispensable role that journalism plays in democracies by providing objective and pluralistic information to the public,

Condemning the fact that in a number of OSCE participating States, journalists have been murdered, assaulted and subjected to various forms of harassment,

Recalling Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that guarantees freedom of expression as a fundamental right, and confirming that freedom of expression is essential to the realization of other rights set forth in international human rights instruments,

Welcoming the unanimous commitment made by all participating States at the OSCE Astana Summit in 2010 to fully implement the commitments taken in all three dimensions, including the Human Dimension, and in particular the recognition of “the important role played by civil society and free media in helping us to ensure full respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy, including free and fair elections, and the rule of law”,

Recalling the decision of the participating States at Copenhagen in 1997 to establish the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, to which they pledged their full cooperation, and their reaffirmation of their adherence to the principles and commitments in the field of free media,

Reaffirming the condemnation by the participating States, at the 1994 Budapest CSCE Summit, of all attacks on and harassment of journalists and their decision to endeavour to hold accountable those directly responsible for such attacks and harassment,

Noting the Resolution on Strengthening OSCE Engagement on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, adopted by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Vilnius in 2009, that urged participating States to investigate effectively threats and acts of violence, including terrorist acts, against journalists, including in situations of armed conflict, and to bring those responsible to justice; and urging participating States to fully investigate criminal activities against journalists, particularly those aimed at intimidating journalists independently reporting, and to prosecute those responsible for those criminal activities,

Underlining the importance that Lithuania attaches to the protection and strengthening of media freedom by making safety of journalists one of the priorities of the 2011 Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship,

The Lithuanian Chairmanship of the OSCE and the Representative on Freedom of the Media of the OSCE present the following summary of the the major findings and best practices presented at the conference.

The Chairmanship and RFOM:

- Strongly encourage governments of OSCE participating States to treat violence against journalists as a direct attack on freedom of expression, and publicly refute any attempt to silence critical or differing voices in the society;
- Recommend that governments give their full political support to the strengthening of media freedom by promoting safe and unimpeded conditions for journalists to perform their professional duties;
- Encourage legislators to increase safe working conditions for journalists by creating legislation that fosters media freedoms, including guarantees of free access to information, protection of confidential sources, and decriminalising journalistic activities, including defamation and libel;
- Advocate that the authorities make it their priority to carry out swift and effective investigations, sending a message to society that perpetrators and masterminds of violence against journalists will be efficiently brought to justice;
- Urge that law enforcement agencies be given sufficient resources and expertise to carry out effective investigations in the particular field of the media and to develop practices that respect the legal rights of members of the media, including their unhindered access to information during public protests or in cases of civil and public unrest;
- Call for due weight to be given to the public interest in judicial procedures initiated against journalists as a result of their professional duties, and to ensure that such cases are handled without delay and in a transparent manner;
- Call upon law enforcement agencies and media to jointly establish good practices that can increase the safety of members of the media and to engage in joint training activities to promote these practices;
- Support the work of the OSCE field operations in their important role in assisting participating States in this regard and encourage field operations to undertake further projects aimed at capacity building and training for the media, including the promotion of dialogue between the media and law enforcement agencies.

In conclusion, the Lithuanian Chairmanship of the OSCE and the Representative on Freedom of the Media of the OSCE offer their reassurances to the participating States that they will continue to promote best practices to enhance the safety of journalists. In particular, the Chairmanship and RFOM will compile and publish a manual of good practices that promote safety of journalists in the course of 2011.

Vilnius, 8 June 2011.