



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1478 Vienna, 13 June 2024

#### **EU statement in response to the Report by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Teresa Ribeiro**

1. The European Union wholeheartedly thanks the Representative on the Freedom of the Media, Ms Teresa Ribeiro, for her report. Madame Representative, we warmly thank you for the work you have done for three and a half years in carrying out this important mandate with great dedication, integrity, and professionalism.

Madame/Mr Chair,

2. All participating States have agreed that respect for democracy, human rights and the rule of law is at the core of the organisation's comprehensive concept of security. Central to this is media freedom and the safety of journalists, which are key priorities for the EU in domestic and external policies. Media freedom is instrumental to both democracy and security. We appreciate your continued emphasis on this interlinkage.
3. As you rightly pointed out in your report, media freedom in our region has faced unprecedented disruptions, marked by escalating repression in the context of democratic decline. Against this background, your resolute voice and the work and autonomy of your Office is crucial. We reiterate our strong support for your mandate.
4. We welcome the RFoM's clear stance and continued emphasis on Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and its impact on media freedom and the safety of journalists in Ukraine. As highlighted in the report, at least ten media actors have been killed in the line of duty, and many more journalists lost their lives as a consequence of the war. Russia's escalation of hostilities and its violations in Ukraine continue unabated, including in relation to media freedom and the

safety of journalists. The most recent report under the Moscow Mechanism confirms that journalists are among the thousands of civilian Ukrainians that have been arbitrarily detained by Russia. Journalists and media actors reporting from armed conflict must be protected in accordance with international humanitarian law. Over the last months, Russia has continued to attack media equipment and infrastructure. These attacks include the recent shelling of a TV tower in Kharkiv and the destruction of a major printing house, also in Kharkiv, where employees were killed and injured.

5. We join the Representative in demanding an end to the suppression and intimidation in the Crimean peninsula, especially against those opposing the illegal annexation by Russia or expressing dissent. We demand an end to such violations also in other Ukrainian territories illegally occupied by Russia.
6. Furthermore, we are grateful for the Representative's continued attention also to the ever-deteriorating situation for media freedom and freedom of expression in Russia and Belarus. We echo the RFoM's statements during the reporting period raising individuals subjected to arbitrary arrests or detentions, and politically motivated imprisonment and other freedom of expression-related setbacks in Russia such as the designation of the international freedom of expression organization ARTICLE 19 as "undesirable".
7. The same goes for the recent statements regarding the sentencing of journalists and media actors in Belarus to imprisonment, where more than 30 media actors are currently detained or imprisoned, and where the authorities' repression particularly targets those media critical of the war of aggression against Ukraine. We repeat our demand for the immediate and unconditional release of all those arbitrarily detained, including journalists and media actors, in both Russia and Belarus.
8. We welcome RFoM's continued attention to worrying developments in countries such as Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Türkiye, Serbia, and elsewhere. We recall the concern you have expressed regarding Georgia's 'transparency of foreign influence' law, and the threats it poses to independent media and civil society.
9. The Representative's work shows that we all have challenges to address. The EU encourages all participating States to engage constructively with the institution and to ensure that it's adequately resourced and staffed. We call on

all participating States to fulfil OSCE commitments pertaining to media freedom and the safety of journalists. We reiterate our firm commitment to do so at home.

10. We thank the Representative and her team for their contribution to the second Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on the timely and important topic of media literacy and democracy. We welcome the launch of the *Guidelines and Recommendations on Media Freedom Literacy*, which informed discussions at the SHDM. We also particularly welcome the RFoM's important work in the field of Safety of Journalists, including Female Journalists, who face an increasing number of attacks online as well as offline, as well as your efforts to address disinformation and the impact of artificial intelligence on media freedom. These issues require our continued attention.

Madame/Mr Chair,

11. In closing, the European Union wishes to thank the RFoM and her dedicated team for extremely valuable work at a challenging point in time, and wish you, dear Madame Representative, and your Office all the best in your future endeavours.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, ALBANIA\*, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA\*, the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.