



Rappresentanza Permanente d'Italia
OSCE

AMB. STEFANO BALDI

ITALY'S STATEMENT AT THE WARSAW HUMAN DIMENSION CONFERENCE

PLENARY SESSION II: FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS I

Freedom of opinion and expression, media freedom; Safety of journalists

Warsaw, 4 October 2023

Mr Moderator,

Italy aligns with the statement delivered by the European Union and would like to add some remarks in a national capacity.

Let me first of all express our appreciation for the excellent work and dedication of the Representative on the freedom of the media, Ms. Teresa Ribeiro – to strengthen the protection of journalists and enhance media freedom and pluralism in the OSCE area.

The dramatic situation of the war of aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine reminds us of the key role played by journalists and media operators to ensure an impartial and transparent information. The number of those that pay with their life is dramatically increasing. We would like to use this occasion to thank journalists and media operators that take this risk daily for the sake of providing us with impartial information.

The protection of the freedom of expression is a priority for Italy. Italy enables the greatest freedom of opinion, while protecting individuals against abuse, violence and discrimination, including against the spreading of hate speech. We fully support media freedom and the protection of journalists and proactively promote them both bilaterally and in multilateral fora. The principle of freedom of expression is enshrined in the Italian Constitution, which guarantees also media pluralism and media independence. There are no restrictions on access to internet or to create blogs - which have become, over the years, an important source of information.

Allow me, in this context, to recall the role of the National Regulatory Authority on Communications (AGCOM), an independent Authority responsible for the whole communication sector in Italy by enforcing the EU Regulatory framework, ensuring media pluralism and online copyright protection, monitoring media concentration, and protecting market competition and consumers. To this end, AGCOM established an Observatory on Journalism in which, as of 2016, a specific focus has been devoted to the intimidation of journalists. Since 2017, AGCOM has also established a self-regulatory body, called “Roundtable to guarantee pluralism and correct information on digital platforms” aimed at promoting self-regulation and co-regulation among its members, which include online advertisers, press publishers, traditional media companies and digital platforms.

Mr. Moderator,

Italy supports the “Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists” of the Council of Europe. The platform is a public space that allows organizations such as Reporters without Borders, the International Federation of Journalists, the European Federation of Journalists, the Association of European Journalists and Article 19, to disseminate information about threats or violations of media freedom and the security of the journalists. Thanks to this Platform, bodies and institutions can be alerted timely and in a more systematic way and, thus, take coordinated action to protect media freedom when necessary. Italy has, also, adhered to the CoE campaign “Journalists Matter”, by nominating two focal points that will work with the relevant Ministries, journalist organizations and stakeholders to draft a three-year plan for raising awareness on the protection of media freedom and independence of journalists.

At the OSCE, Italy has contributed financially to the extra-budget project focused on the security of journalists, thus showing the utmost importance it attaches to media freedom and protection of journalists. The project aims at assisting the participating States in the implementation of the Ministerial Council decision on the Safety of Journalists adopted in Milan in 2018 during Italy’s Chairmanship of the OSCE.

Finally, allow me also to recall that in December 2017 the Italian Ministry of Interior established the "Coordination Centre for monitoring, analysis and permanent exchange of information on the phenomenon of intimidating acts against journalists". This has been considered as a best practice by the OSCE.

Thank you.