



**LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS NUOLATINĖ ATSTOVYBĖ
PRIE TARPTAUTINIŲ ORGANIZACIJŲ VIENOJE**

**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
TO THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA**

**Statement by the delegation of the Republic of Lithuania in response
to the report by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media**

*As delivered by the Lithuanian Permanent Representative Aurimas Taurantas,
OSCE Permanent Council meeting, 4 July 2019*

It is my pleasure to join other colleagues in welcoming the Representative of Freedom of the Media Mr Harlem Désir, and thank him for his report and dedicated activities. I also wish all the best to Mr Frane Maroević in his future endeavours.

While Lithuania aligns itself with the European Union statement, let me share a few remarks in my national capacity.

We greatly value the expert support provided by the RFoM and his professional staff and are grateful for the remarks and suggestions to our national media developments, which are helpful in promoting media freedom and freedom of expression in Lithuania. This was also emphasised by the Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius in his meeting with Mr Harlem Désir last December in Milan.

As it is noted in the report, various Lithuanian national legislative initiatives were widely discussed during the recent months, involving the community of journalists, academics and other relevant stakeholders. In this inclusive democratic process, some legislative initiatives have not received support, while the others were improved, taking into account RFoM recommendations, in order to match the highest international standards of freedom of the media.

On the case of entry ban of the editor for Sputnik Lithuania Marat Kasem at Vilnius airport a month ago, mentioned in the RFoM Report, I would like to emphasize that all actions taken by the respective Lithuanian authorities against Mr Kasem were in full compliance with the national and EU law, and international commitments. And for sure, Mr Kasem has the right to appeal this decision. Though Russian state controlled company “Sputnik” portrays itself as a media company, for such reasons, as systematic fuelling of disinformation and hatred, its activities are banned in a number of countries. Moreover, in 2016, European Parliament resolution, “Sputnik” was named as one of the main information threats to the European Union.

As regards the safety of journalists, which is a long-standing priority for Lithuania, let me share with you one national example of good practice. Two months ago, the Lithuanian Journalists’ Union has made the first step towards the implementation of the Milan Ministerial Council decision on the Safety of Journalists by establishing the Committee on Protection and Monitoring of Journalists’ Rights, which will monitor the cases of violations of the rights of journalists and

seek for the possible solutions. This welcome initiative has started at the grassroots level and we hope it could contribute to the creation of a national system of data collection, analysis and reporting on attacks and violence against journalists.

In this discussion, it is worth mentioning some other important international developments in freedom of media field, that Lithuania is part of. My country co-authors the French led initiative on International Partnership for Information and Democracy, which aims to promote national and international legal frameworks related to the right to freedom of expression and safety of journalists. We also welcome the Global Conference for Media Freedom organised by the United Kingdom and Canada next week in London. Lithuania intends to join the Global Pledge on Media Freedom initiated by the UK.

We are awaiting for the updated edition of the RFoM Guidebook on the safety of journalists. The 1st Guidebook was initiated by the Lithuanian Chairmanship in 2011 on the basis of the recommendations from the Vilnius Conference on Safety of Journalists. Now Lithuania politically and financially supports the 3rd edition of the Guidebook and looks forward to its launching in due time.

Lithuania has always promoted media freedom and freedom of expression as one of the main pillars of modern democracy. This is why we will continue our strong support of the mandate and activities of the RFoM with emphasis on safety of journalists so powerfully presented today by Mr Désir.