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**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 950
Vienna, 2 May 2013**

EU statement on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day

On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day tomorrow, the European Union commends those throughout the OSCE area who exercise their right to freedom of expression in the face of restrictions that violate our common media freedom commitments. These restrictions often take the form of physical attacks or harassment, as well as intimidation or undue restrictions and legislative attempts to over-regulate the media, both online as well as offline.

The European Union calls upon all participating States to promote and protect the safety of journalists and to allow them to carry out their vital role of reporting and commenting on events in an independent manner, online as well as offline without fear of violence, recrimination or persecution. Moreover, the European Union would like to remind all participating States of our commitment to ensure that the Internet remains an open and public forum. Access to the Internet can only be restricted in exceptional situations and in full accordance with relevant provisions of international human rights law.

Mr/Mrs Chairperson, freedom of expression and freedom of the media constitute cornerstones of a democratic society. We reaffirm our determination to continue to promote freedom of expression and freedom of the media, online as well as offline, including safety of journalists within the OSCE area. We would like to take this opportunity to express our strong appreciation for the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM), Ms Dunja Mijatović, and her team for their invaluable work in assisting the participating States in complying with our commitments in the field of freedom of the media. We call on all participating States to cooperate with Ms Mijatović and her Office and make use of their assistance and expertise.

Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.