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Thematic debate: « Safety of journalists – Further steps for the better implementation of human rights standards »

Proposals for follow-up

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Follow-up

Following the thematic debate on 12 December on the basis of the discussion paper SG/Inf(2013)42, the Committee of Ministers has invited me to submit operational proposals, emphasizing the need for co-ordination with other international organisations, in particular the European Union, the OSCE and the United Nations.

As an immediate measure, I have established a Task Force chaired by the Deputy Secretary General and consisting of representatives of the relevant Secretariat departments (DG I, CM, ODG-Prog, PACE and the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights). This Task Force has taken stock of work already under way and has identified the following areas for further consideration and concrete action.

Work already under way

- *The Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI) is to elaborate guidelines for the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists and others who carry out journalistic activity or perform public watchdog functions with a view to establishing effective legislative frameworks, practice and law enforcement processes at national level, including with regard to positive obligations in line with the case law of the European Court of Human Rights:*

- A draft declaration of the Committee of Ministers on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors has been finalised by the CDMSI and will be submitted to the Committee of Ministers for adoption in April 2014;

- A Committee of Experts (MSI-JO) reporting to the CDMSI has been established by the Committee of Ministers, mandated to prepare a Recommendation, with practical guidelines, on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors. This expert group will start its work in the spring of 2014;

- The finalisation of this work and submission of the draft Recommendation with its guidelines to the Committee of Ministers for consideration and possible adoption, is expected during 2015.

Need for further action

- *In order to establish rapid response capacity to instances of threats or violence against journalists or other media actors:*
 - I will call for a **roundtable** of all interested international institutions and media freedom organisations to be held in Strasbourg in May 2014 with the participation, in particular, of the OSCE Special Representative for Media Freedom, in order to identify ways of better addressing threats and violence against journalists;
 - Drawing on the conclusions of the roundtable and, as proposed by the Parliamentary Assembly, a **Conference** on media freedom with a particular focus on protection of journalism and safety of journalists will be organised by the Parliamentary Assembly in the autumn of 2014. The aim of the Conference will be to promote the exchange of best practices among member States and explore ways, together with other international partners, of establishing rapid-response capacity.
 - Following consultation with other stakeholders and international partners at the above-mentioned roundtable a detailed proposal will be prepared before the summer for the **launch, at the Conference, of the Internet based platform**, the usefulness of which was agreed upon by the Committee of Ministers on 10 July 2013.

The financial implications of the above initiatives will be covered by existing appropriations within the Organisation (see Annex). As regards the Internet based platform, it is clear that existing appropriations will not be sufficient and that alternative financing will be needed. The detailed proposal about the Internet based platform will also include a budgetary estimate and a specific request for voluntary contributions.

- *In order to fight impunity:*
 - The Secretariat will intensify actions to raise awareness of existing international standards and mechanisms of protection, and will enhance training of law enforcement officials in charge of investigating and prosecuting crimes against journalists. I will instruct ODG-Prog to prepare a programme in this respect, with possible funding from the Human Rights Trust Fund, and propose it to interested member States.
- *In order to ensure better co-operation inside and outside the Council of Europe when combating violence against journalists and promoting their safety:*
 - I have initiated a discussion in the Secretariat on how to improve the information sharing and coordination within the Council of Europe on safety of journalists and protection of journalism, including with the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights;
 - Contacts with the OSCE Special Representative for Media Freedom have been established with the aim of strengthening co-operation. Concrete proposals have been discussed and will be further explored during a visit of the OSCE Special Representative to the Council of Europe in the coming months.

The Committee of Ministers will be informed of steps taken.

Annex

Thematic debate: «Safety of journalists – Further steps for the better implementation of human rights standards»

Proposals for Follow-up

Following the thematic debate on 12 December 2013 on the basis of the discussion paper SG/Inf(2013)42, the Committee of Ministers invited me to submit operational proposals, emphasising the need for co-ordination with other international organisations, in particular the European Union, the OSCE and the United Nations. The measures undertaken and proposed are set out in the roadmap below, including timelines and resource implications.

Action	Body responsible	Deadline	Budget implications
Task Force (TF)	Chaired by the Deputy Secretary General and consisting of representatives of the Secretariat (CM, DGI, ODG-Prog, PACE and the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights)	Already done	None
Guidelines for the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CM Declaration - CM Recommendation 	Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI) Committee of Experts (MSI-JO) reporting to the CDMSI established by the Committee of Ministers	Under way CM Declaration expected adoption April 2014 CM Recommendation expected adoption 2015	Covered by existing budget
Establish rapid response capacity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Round table • Detailed proposal for launch of Internet based platform • Conference • Launch of Internet based platform during Conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DGI • DGI • PACE • DGI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2014: preceding CDMSI Plenary • Summer 2014 • Autumn 2014 • Autumn 2014 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be covered by existing budget and possible external funding • To be covered by existing budget and external funding • PACE Budget • To be covered by external funding
Raise awareness of existing international standards and mechanisms of protection	ODG-Prog	June 2015	Funding to be secured

