



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
STATEMENT BY MR. FREDRIK RANKE
SECOND SECRETARY
PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS II
FREEDOM OF MEDIA, FREE MEDIA AND INFORMATION
WORKING SESSION 16**

Warszawa, October 4, 2007

Mr. Moderator,

Last year's cartoon controversy evoked strong emotions and widespread debate. Indonesia and Norway decided to respond by joining forces to promote a Global Inter-Media Dialogue.

Mr. Moderator,

The Global Inter-Media Dialogue focuses on freedom of expression and the media's role in a globalised world. It is a forum where leading media actors from different continents, countries and cultures can discuss ways and means of promoting freedom of expression and greater tolerance. Many of the participants are from OSCE countries such as Russia, Azerbaijan, Albania, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Denmark. The dialogue provides a forum for exchange of information, networking and cooperation between Western media and media in predominantly Muslim countries.

The two governments provide the arena and act as facilitators, while about 100 editors and journalists from more than 50 countries define the agenda and steer the discussions. So far, there have been two dialogue meetings. The first took place in Indonesia last year, and the second was held in Norway in June this year.

At the first Global Inter-Media Dialogue meeting many discussions focused on codes of ethics, either at government level or within the media. The participants unanimously agreed that there was no need for a new code of ethics for governments. Different forms of self-regulation were also debated, and the participants stressed that no further limitations should be imposed on independent media.

The discussions also explored whether it is possible to simultaneously preserve freedom of expression and foster respect for cultural sensitivities. The conclusion reached on the basis of the two Global Inter-Media Dialogue meetings was a definitive yes.

Mr. Moderator,

We all know that freedom of expression is not absolute – we also have responsibilities as individuals and as states. We also know that freedom of expression needs to be constantly restated. And we know that a democratic society depends on free media and on freedom of expression. The very test of democracy is freedom of criticism, unpleasant though it may be to be criticised.

We believe that hate speech and racism should not be countered with regulations and restrictions. It is much more important to identify policies and actions that tackle the causes of inequality and to protect those whose right to equality and to be free from racism is being attacked or undermined.

Mr. Moderator,

What have we learned from the Dialogue? We have learned new lessons about interdependency. And that when we face conflicts, we need to seek solutions through dialogue. Dialogue does not mean that we renounce our interests, but that we see these interests best served by identifying common ground, understanding our interdependence, and seeking mutual opportunities. This is why we have to meet, talk and learn about each other's views. Not necessarily to agree, but to understand. Not to compromise on fundamental values and principles, but to build bridges.