



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement Welcoming New Russia Legislation Decriminalizing Defamation and Insult and Protecting Journalists

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 24, 2011

The United States joins with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in welcoming the announcement that the Russian Federation decriminalized defamatory speech and insult on November 17. In doing so, Russia becomes the latest in a growing number of OSCE participating States to modernize their legislation by taking this important step. As Representative Mijatovic said in her public statement, the United States also believes these measures will have important positive implications for media freedom in Russia.

Mr. Chairman, the United States also welcomes the announcement that the Russian Duma passed legislation specifically punishing threats or violence against journalists as a professional group or against their relatives. This is an important step that will hopefully enhance the safety of journalists in Russia, and one that we hope will be followed by progress in the investigations of past crimes against journalists.

We call upon all participating States that have not yet decriminalized defamation or insult to do so, and we hope that the actions of the Duma to categorize attacks against journalists as a crime will strengthen the resolve of all participating States to reach consensus on a Ministerial Decision in Vilnius this year on enhancing the safety of journalists.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.