

REPRESENTATIVE ON FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA OF THE OSCE
CANDIDACY OF MR. HARLEM DESIR



A candidacy in an increasingly challenging environment

- In the current environment of increasing challenges to the freedom of the media, particularly the emergence of new sources of information, but also persistent threats to the freedom and security of journalists, the role of the OSCE and its Representative on Freedom of the Media seems even more important now than it did upon its creation in 1997. Over the last decade, journalists have continued to be victims of verbal and physical threats and attacks, some have been tortured, and many have been harassed or prevented from doing their jobs. Several have died in the course of their work.
- The OSCE area and the European continent are no exceptions: the freedom of the media is often still undermined. Yet, Europe must be a safe area for journalists, who should be able to do their jobs in complete freedom. As a regional organization, based on a multidimensional security approach and on shared international commitments, the OSCE is an essential instrument in protecting fundamental freedoms, of which the freedom of the media and journalists is an essential aspect. The work carried out by successive Representatives on Freedom of the Media has enabled the OSCE and its participating States to both collectively and individually exert permanent vigilance in a field where no progress, in any country, can ever be taken for granted.
- It is for these reasons, after having served as a Member of the European Parliament and Minister of State for European Affairs, that I have chosen to apply for the position of OSCE Special Representative on Freedom of the Media. Over the past three years, I have formed very close relationships with each of my counterparts, as well as with governments in the OSCE area. Security and fundamental rights and freedoms, including freedom of the media, were among my top priorities. Through my candidacy, I would like to offer this political experience, as well as my civil society background, to the benefit of the OSCE and each of its participating States. My ambitions for this position are to actively promote the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the OSCE principles and commitments, notably the freedom of expression and its corollary, the freedom of the media, and to promote solutions in this area. France's long-standing international commitment to these issues is part of the spirit of my project and my vision.

A commitment to objectivity, impartiality and dialogue

- The Representative on Freedom of the Media must be free of all national bias and adopt an open and depoliticized approach to his or her work. If I am appointed, my work will be based on independent, objective, and impartial analysis of the facts within the framework of the mandate. I will carry out this analysis with my team, with each participating State, with civil society, and with media representatives. As an observer of the media situation in the OSCE area, the Representative's goal will be, like his or her predecessors, to seek the truth, without prejudice or bias.
- I will pledge to hold inclusive and constructive dialogue with all OSCE participating States, and to listen to their specific expectations and concerns. Negotiating pragmatic solutions to problematic situations will be one of my priorities. To do this, I will commit to collaborate with participating States, as the primary responsible party for ensuring fundamental freedoms on their territory, including the freedom

of the media, and to support them in implementing their commitments. My extensive political experience, through the links I have created in recent years, and through my commitment to each of my civil and government partners, will allow me to identify the individual and institutional solutions which are essential to managing a well-informed international society.

A priority to achieve tangible results

- Against a changing backdrop, the work of the future Representative will be to ensure compliance with the shared standards as regards freedom of the media and maintaining the achievements of the OSCE, while strengthening their operationalization in areas such as media pluralism, media self-regulation, media legislation, the safety of journalists, the fight against censorship and the instrumentalization of journalists' work. In that sense, my work will follow on from that of the previous representatives.
- It will also focus on developing new lines of action which can be developed in collaboration with the participating States. The foundation of commitments and standards created under the OSCE must be developed and adapted to the challenges of today's world and developments in the years ahead, in particular the challenges and threats specific to online media.
- With the team of the RFoM Office, I will also be eager to take action to support participating States and to better tailor the resources available to the Office to the specific needs of the requesting States.
- Wherever possible, I will liaise with the other international organizations dealing with the same issues in order to ensure that the OSCE acts consistently, and thus strengthens synergies with the other relevant international bodies, particularly the United Nations but also the Council of Europe. Links with civil society will also be vital.
- I am aware that in the current climate of budgetary restrictions, it will be essential to optimize the resources which the participating States make available to the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the OSCE's other independent institutions and its Secretariat. I will commit to this, as I will to defending a budget which will enable a meaningful mandate.