

Joint UK-Canada Statement on the Global Conference for Media Freedom

Mr Chairman, Distinguished Ambassadors, Colleagues

I make this statement on behalf of Canada and the United Kingdom. Earlier this year, my Canadian colleague briefed the Permanent Council on the UK and Canada's plans for the Global Conference on Media Freedom. I would like to share some highlights from the conference, which took place in London on 10-11 July 2019, and look ahead to the future.

Over 100 countries were represented at the conference, with 60 ministers and 1,500 delegates from all regions. Over the two days, there were 25 different panel discussions on a variety of issues around media freedom. In their keynote speeches the UK Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, the Canadian Foreign Minister and former journalist, Chrystia Freeland, and Special Envoy on Media Freedom, Amal Clooney, set out the challenge to participants to champion media freedom. The conference also heard directly from journalists who face harassment, threats and legal pressure at home.

I am delighted that the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Harlem Désir, and a team from his office joined us in London. Mr Désir took part in the launch of the Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression, with his counterparts from the UN, Organisation of American States, African Union and civil society. He also participated in a plenary discussion with the Foreign Ministers of Germany, Malta and Uzbekistan, and RFOM colleagues joined sessions on the Western Balkans. We are also pleased that the documentary, A Dark Place, on safety of female journalists online received its first London screening at the Conference.

We announced several initiatives at the conference:

- A Global Pledge for signature by Governments to commit to forming a new coalition to protect media freedom and – through a contact group of MFAs and diplomatic missions – to lobby on cases of attacks on journalists.
- Development of a UK National Committee and National Action Plan on the Safety of Journalists
- An international task force, involving multilateral organisations and civil society, which will provide support to countries drawing up National Action Plans.
- A new Global Media Defence Fund, to be administered by UNESCO to support journalists to access legal advice and training on safety and investigative journalism.

The conference hosted a first meeting of the independent High Level Panel of Legal Experts on Media Freedom, convened by Special Envoy Amal Clooney, and to be chaired by former UK Supreme Court President Lord Neuberger

Media freedom is essential for economic prosperity, social development and resilient democracies, for maintaining a free and open society and accountable systems of government and for safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We are grateful to the many OSCE states that participated and made the conference such a success. The conference was just the start, not the culmination, of our joint campaign. We will continue to encourage states to support the media freedom coalition and pledge, and to contribute to the Global Media Defence Fund.

Thank you.