

Remarks by EU Head of Delegation -- launching of the media freedom report 2013 and the Press Freedom Award

Wednesday, 26 February 2014

10:00 – Sheba hotel

Good morning,

- It is my pleasure to be here with you today to launch the press freedoms report for 2013 by the Freedom Foundation and celebrate the winners of the Press Freedom Award. At the outset, I would like to extend my thanks to Mr Khaled al-Hamadi and his Freedom Foundation for all their efforts to make this come true.

- The EU is very proud to support this kind of initiatives that can contribute to protecting and promoting media freedoms, especially in a country like Yemen.

- Press freedom is a vital principle of freedom of speech and it is about our right to know. The right to know is fundamental for protecting other rights and freedoms, ensuring justice, transparency and accountability.

- The flow of information is a powerful force in any society and plays a pivotal role in sustaining development and promoting transparency and accountability. This is essentially what a country like Yemen really needs.

- Regrettably, in the case of Yemen, it has been really worrying to continue to hear about a staggering number of violations despite an overall improvement in the level of press freedom. We therefore urge the government of Yemen to comply with its national and international commitments to protect press freedoms. We do think that the recommendations of the National Dialogue Conference can form as a very good basis for ensuring freer media and better protection of human rights in Yemen.

- It is also regrettable that despite the improving media environment in Yemen, the level of professionalism is still very low. Unfortunately, the Yemeni media landscape remains highly polarised, and frequently the media are manipulated to serve political agendas and self-interests. Worst is that the media is employed for fomenting political and sectarian tension.

- The European Union is strongly committed to promoting the freedom of the press all over the world. We do believe that a free and vibrant media is part and parcel of the development of any country. In this regard, the EU Delegation will strive to work more closely with the Yemeni media and human rights defenders to promote human rights and the other fundamental rights, including the freedom of the press. We are at the same time very proud that we are a leading donor to human rights organisations in Yemen. We do hope that in the future we can support the Yemen media and contribute to its development.

- Thanks and I wish you all the best,