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STATEMENT

**Council of Europe: ARTICLE 19 Welcomes Resolution
on Ukraine's Democratic Development**

ARTICLE 19 welcomes the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's (PACE) recent adoption of a resolution and set of recommendations on the functioning of democratic institutions in Ukraine. ARTICLE 19 urges the Ukrainian government to address PACE's concerns without delay, specifically in relation to the right to freedom of expression.

On 5 October 2010, PACE adopted the resolution based on a report by the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee). In the resolution, PACE stipulates a number of key concerns relating to pressure on democratic freedoms and rights, including freedom of expression and freedom of the media in Ukraine. PACE also finds interference in the work of journalists and media organisations, including by state organs, law enforcement officials and security services, incompatible with a democratic society.

Many of the concerns outlined by the report and resolution reflect the repeated calls made by ARTICLE 19 and other organisations to the Ukrainian government. In a letter to President Yanukovich for his inauguration in February 2010, ARTICLE 19 urged him to respond immediately to serious freedom of expression shortcomings within the legislative and policy framework. These calls were repeated in the June 2010 statement, marking the President's 100 days in office, when ARTICLE 19 expressed concern about the deterioration of media freedoms, including the re-emergence of censorship and the growing pressure and administrative harassment of independently-owned media outlets, specifically TV stations, and an increase in physical attacks and harassment of journalists.

Key recommendations to the Ukrainian Government include the call to investigate all allegations of infringements of rights and freedoms and to remedy any violations found. In addition, it calls upon the authorities to reform the security services and ensure that legal proceedings do not result in the selective revocation of broadcasting frequencies. Since PACE considers media freedom and pluralism as cornerstones of democracy, it called on the authorities to take all necessary measures to protect media freedom and pluralism in Ukraine and to refrain from any attempts to control, directly or indirectly, the content of the reporting in the national media.

In addition, as part of its section on the fight against corruption, PACE called on the Ukrainian parliament to adopt the Law on Access to Public Information, which is currently pending. ARTICLE 19, together with its partner organisations, has long campaigned for the adoption of such a law, which will ensure that the authorities are transparent and open, and each citizen has the right to freely access public information. Adopting such a law would give a clear sign that Ukraine is committed to transparent and accountable governance.

ARTICLE 19 supports these recommendations and calls on the Ukrainian authorities to implement them without delay. In particular, the Parliament should proceed with the adoption of a comprehensive law on access to public information that will meet international freedom of information standards.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For more information please contact: Nathalie Losekoot, Senior Programme Officer, nathalie@article19.org, +44 20 7324 2500
- To read the Monitoring Committee report, see: <http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/WorkingDocs/Doc10/eDOC12357.htm>; and the PACE Resolution: <http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta10/ERES1755.htm>
- ARTICLE 19's previous statements on Ukraine are available at <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/press/ukraine-article-19-and-international-media-support-call-on-new-president-of-.pdf>; <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/press/ukraine-press-freedom-situation-deteriorating-under-new-president.pdf> and <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/press/combating-impunity-for-those-who-attack-and-kill-journalists-in-belarus-russ.pdf>
- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.