

Thank you, Mr. President,

The assassination of Ján Kuciak and his fiancée Martina Kušnírová shocked the Slovak Republic, which has never faced such an unprecedented attack on a journalist. We deeply mourn the deaths of two innocent young people. Our hearts are with the families, friends and colleagues of Ján Kuciak and his fiancée and we send them our deepest condolences once again.

All the political representatives of the Slovak Republic, including the President, the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the Parliament and the political parties, condemned this atrocious act and called for a speedy investigation.

In this regard, I would like to stress that Slovakia has a zero tolerance policy for all acts of violence against journalists. We fully respect the values on which the Council of Europe is based and our international obligations concerning freedom of speech and the freedom of the media, including the obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Slovak Government supports the judicial authorities in all possible measures. A thorough investigation was ordered immediately after the discovery of the crime. An investigation team comprising the police, representatives of the State Prosecutor's Office, the Ministry of the Interior and the intelligence agency has already been established.

The government promises a reward of 1 million euros to anyone with information that could lead to the identification of those responsible.

Slovak society has expressed its indignation at this heinous crime, as evidenced by several spontaneous commemorative events that have already taken place across the country.

Let me also take this opportunity and thank our international partners, including

the FBI, Scotland Yard, the Czech and Italian authorities for the help they have already provided. We remain ready to inform the international community of the future development of the murder investigation. Slovakia cooperates fully with the Council of Europe as was the case with the Platform for the Promotion of Journalism and the Safety of Journalists, to which our Mission provided the response immediately after the presentation of the alert. In addition, this issue will be discussed between my authorities and Commissioner Muižnikes during his next visit to the Slovak Republic to be held next week.

In conclusion, I would like to ask you, Mr. President, to include my statement in the minutes of the meeting.

Thank you.