Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am pleased to welcome you to this meeting today.

I wish to thank the Open Society Foundation and DEMOS for their support. I would also like to express my appreciation to the Government of Austria, which has also provided vital assistance and shown a deep commitment towards solving the two most pressing issues facing freedom of expression today – enhancing the safety of journalists, media workers, and social media producers, and ending impunity for the crimes against them.

As you know, UNESCO has promoted the need for improved safety for journalists for many years and fought against impunity globally. Indeed, we have worked with many of you present today, and we will continue to do so in the future.

Today’s meeting could not be more timely.

More than 100 journalists have been killed so far this year, making 2012 the deadliest year for the media since UNESCO began keeping records on the killings of journalists. And we are only in November.

Thirty one of these journalists were killed in Syria. Another fifteen were killed in Somalia. However, the overwhelming majority of victims were not war correspondents. They were local reporters covering corruption and other illegal activities, such as drug trafficking or illegal logging in their home towns.

Message from Ms Irina Bokova,
Director-General of UNESCO
on the occasion of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} UN Inter-Agency on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity

Vienna, 22 November 2012
I have publicly condemned each of these killings, and I have called on the relevant authorities in each case to fully investigate the circumstances and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Where the information is supplied, the results of these investigations are included in my bi-annual Report on the Safety of Journalists and the Danger of Impunity. There are still too many gaps in this Report, indicating that investigations are either ongoing, that they have reached a dead end, or that they have not even begun.

Your task today is to flesh out the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, endorsed by the United Nations Chief Executives Board last April.

In keeping with the Plan, we must strengthen UN coherence, improve cooperation with and between UN Member States, share best practices, build partnerships with other organizations and raise awareness about the importance of these two issues for the development and wellbeing of today’s societies.

This is the first time the UN family has come together to systematically address these concerns. Expectations of success are high among our partners. To succeed, all stakeholders must be on board, from the UN to Governments to civil society, and we must work together. I hope that with our collective expertise and experience we will be able to produce a set of concrete and achievable strategies to reverse a deteriorating situation, to create a safer working environment for journalists and to put an end to impunity. The death toll is still rising for 2012.

We must break the vicious cycle that silences journalists, deprives society of important voices and frightens other citizens, preventing them from speaking out. Let us deepen our resolve, increase our efforts and put our weight behind this UN Plan to make it work.

I wish you every success for this important meeting.

Irina Bokova