



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT ON CIVIL SOCIETY IN HUNGARY

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 18 September 2014

Mr Chairman,

We share the concerns expressed by the US and Canadian delegations about the policies of the Hungarian Government towards civil society and independent media.

An active civil society and independent media are vital in ensuring respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. They help us to implement our OSCE commitments. Norway supports the development of a vibrant civil society in several countries, including OSCE participating States.

Support to civil society organizations is also a part of the EEA and Norway Grant schemes, under which we contribute to development in several European Union member states. This support is valued by both governments and civil society.

Mr Chairman,

On 8 September, Hungarian police carried out a raid on the offices of the organization Ökotars in Budapest. This organization is tasked with managing the funds allocated to NGOs in Hungary through the EEA and Norway grants, on behalf of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

This police raid is unacceptable. In a press statement last week, Minister of EEA and EU Affairs Vidar Helgesen said that “The police raid on 8 September shows that the Hungarian authorities are seeking to undermine the independence of civil society”.

Thank you, Mr Chairman