



**PERMANENT DELEGATION  
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT BY NORWAY IN RESPONSE TO THE HEAD OF THE OSCE  
OFFICE IN TAJIKISTAN, AMBASSADOR IVAR VIKKI**

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
10 May, 2012

**Mr. Chairman,**

Norway warmly welcomes Ambassador Ivar Vikki back to the Council. We thank him for his comprehensive, and at the same time concise, report, providing us with an excellent overview of main developments in Tajikistan and of the OSCE Office's impressive range of activities over the past year.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The cooperation between Tajikistan and the OSCE Office has been further strengthened during this period, not least proven by the recent ratification of the Memorandum of Understanding between Tajikistan and the OSCE. The establishment of a legal framework for cooperation underlines the will on both sides to honestly engage in a process to strengthen the Tajik society in all three dimensions.

We have also noted positive progress on several important issues. Allow me to mention president Rahmon's call in March for decriminalizing libel and defamation and his ideas on access to information. These are areas where the OSCE has plentiful resources to assist and advice the Tajik authorities, both on those areas where we share opinion, but also on some of those areas where we seem to disagree, for instance over what president Rahmon named "information battles" and on attempts to block access to websites.

This also goes for the strive we have seen from Tajik authorities to regulate freedom of religion and freedom of assembly. We commend the Office for raising such issues in dialogue with the authorities, as we commend the Tajik authorities for their willingness to listen and to explain. Such dialogues only strengthen the understanding and the cooperation between the Office and the host nation.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Tajikistan is important to the OSCE because of its geostrategic position. Being a first line defender towards many of the threats stemming from unruly parts of Afghanistan, we all have a common interest in supporting the Tajik authorities.

Border management activities and police reform will continue to be important fields of cooperation. We are proud sponsors of the OSCE Border Management Staff College (BMSC), which is instrumental in our joint efforts to strengthen border management and control in the region.

However, educating staff alone will never be enough to stop all illegal border crossings. A lack of sufficient resources on the authority side, often also combined with varying degrees of corruption, give the criminal side decisive advantages. Increasing the legal trade across the borders will help to curb parts of the illegal flow, making the border crossings more transparent.

**Mr. Chairman,**

We welcome the ongoing processes on legal reforms, not least the new article in the Criminal Code that defines torture in line with the UN Convention Against Torture.

We commend the good work on promoting gender awareness and equality, especially the successful project to sustain operations of eleven OSCE-supported Women's Resource Centres in several regions. We encourage you to increase your efforts in the regions. We also hope that the lessons learned through the Khujand shelter for victims of domestic violence will help addressing one of the most serious obstacles to gender equality.

The cooperation between Tajik authorities and the OSCE Office under the leadership of Ambassador Vikki has proven that good progress in a wide array of areas can be achieved, even with limited resources. We wish him and his competent and dedicated staff every success in their future work.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairman.**