



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO DIRECTOR OF ODIHR, AMBASSADOR MICHAEL
LINK**

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 12 March 2015

Mr Chairman,

I welcome ODIHR Director Michael Link back to the Permanent Council and thank him for an excellent report.

I will be fairly brief as I fully subscribe to the points made by Latvia on behalf of the EU, and by previous speakers, with – I have to say – one exception.

Mr Chairman,

We welcome the recent launch of the Guidelines on Freedom of Association, and the launch of the updated Guidelines on Registration and Recognition of Religious or Belief Communities. Both sets of guidelines were developed jointly by ODIHR and the Council of Europe's Venice Commission. These guidelines are important tools for improving the implementation of our commitments related to fundamental freedoms. They also represent good examples of fruitful cooperation between the two organisations.

Mr Chairman,

Close and practical cooperation between ODIHR and the Council of Europe should continue to be a priority for ODIHR.

Strengthened cooperation with the UN is of equal importance. This was pointed out by UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon to the Permanent Council last autumn. The same message was expressed by CiO Ivica Dačić, when he addressed the UN Security Council last month. He said that: "Partnership between the two organizations is critical for addressing security challenges in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space".

The cooperation agreement signed between ODIHR and UNHCR in Geneva last week is a step in the right direction.

Mr. Chairman,

ODIHR's work is key for our organisation's efforts in the third dimension. It is important that the institution can develop and adapt to new challenges. We welcome that countering torture will be integrated in the institution's work.

Norway further supports a prominent role of ODIHR in assisting Ukraine in developing a democratic and prosperous society, bearing in mind, perhaps, certain caveats explained to us by Director Link a few weeks back.

Mr Chairman,

The current crisis in Ukraine demands attention and resources. We must ensure that our support to Ukraine does not limit our support to the institutions. If we want to advance the human dimension of our organisation – and thereby also stability and security in the OSCE area – we must ensure that ODIHR is given the resources they need to meet our expectations. For the same reason we must respect – and appreciate – the autonomy of the institutions.

Mr. Chairman,

An important point in Director Link's presentation was election observation, and the role prominent parliamentarians can play in providing visible and strong leadership to these activities. I am happy to note that Norwegian politicians contribute in this regard, most recently in Tajikistan.

Mr Chairman,

I will conclude by expressing my gratitude to Director Link and to his staff for their dedication and hard work. I would also like to thank ODIHR for active support to the Human Dimension Committee.

Thank you, Mr Chairman