



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT BY NORWAY IN RESPONSE TO THE MINISTER FOR WOMEN'S AFFAIRS OF AFGHANISTAN

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 21 May 2015

Mr Chairman,

Norway strongly supports the reform agenda presented by the Government of Afghanistan and outlined in the intervention of the Minister of Women's Affairs. This agenda includes pursuing a process of peace and reconciliation, good governance, fighting corruption, promoting economic development and strengthening human rights, including women's rights and the empowerment of women.

Mr Chairman,

Afghanistan was the largest recipient of Norwegian development funds last year. We have a longstanding commitment and will continue our support for many years to come. Our aim is to help Afghanistan build the foundations for effective self-government.

Equal rights for women and education for girls are among our main priorities. And we see results of these efforts. 39% of the pupils in Afghan schools are now girls. Maternal mortality is down by 80% since 2001. Life expectancy for women has increased from 44 to 64 years. 27% of the members of parliament are women. These results are very encouraging.

However, serious challenges remain. There is a need for judicial reform to ensure equality before the law. Violence against women and girls must be combatted and prosecuted. The 60% of all girls that do not go to school must be educated.

Mr Chairman,

The Afghan government is working towards peace and reconciliation in the country. This process must include civil society and it must include women. It is essential to

safeguard the rights enshrined in the constitution, including women's rights. These rights cannot be subject to negotiation. We welcome the development of a National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security, which will contribute to increasing the participation of women in the peace process and the security sector.

Mr Chairman,

We are encouraged by the Afghan government's plans for reform and development. But we need to see constant attention to implementation. The government must appoint more women to positions of power, include women in the reconciliation process, invest in girls' education, teach respect for new roles for women and make it easier for women to take jobs outside the home.

We have great confidence that you, Madame Minister, will push for reforms and women's rights. This is a substantial challenge for Afghanistan. You can count on our continued support for these common goals.

Thank you, Mr Chairman