



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT BY NORWAY IN RESPONSE TO THE EU SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR CENTRAL ASIA PATRICIA FLOR

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile to the Permanent Council,
Vienna 11 April 2013

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to join previous speakers in welcoming Ambassador Flor to the Permanent Council and to thank her for her introduction. The introduction proves beyond doubt the value of the EU engagement in Central Asia.

Mr. Chairman,

There is broad agreement in our organisation that the five Central Asian countries need support in their efforts to develop their societies and to consolidate the security and stability in their region. There is also agreement among OSCE participating states that stability in Central Asia cannot be seen isolated from the situation in neighbouring Afghanistan.

We are also fully aware that instability in Central Asia will affect the whole OSCE area. Central Asia is in many ways a first line defender against many of the transnational threats to our common security

Mr. Chairman,

We strongly believe that the OSCE, through the field missions as well as through our work in Vienna, in the Hague and in Warsaw, makes a difference for all five Central Asian countries. This is also why we will continue to argue in favour of strengthening the field missions in these OSCE participating states.

But also individual countries can make tangible contributions. Norway has over the past years expanded our contacts, support and cooperation with the Central Asian countries, in particular with Kazakhstan.

For obvious reasons our bilateral cooperation with Kazakhstan centres around questions related to the management of petroleum resources. But also other issues have our attention. When Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister Idrissov visited Oslo last month he signed together with his

Norwegian counterpart a Memorandum of Understanding on bilateral cooperation, which covers all three dimensions of the OSCE, including issues related to human rights and democracy.

Mr. Chairman,

Many issues confronting Central Asia must be solved regionally. Water management, border control and organized crime, drugs, terrorism as well as infrastructure development are all issues that call for increased cooperation between the concerned states. We therefore urge the Central Asian countries to strengthen the cooperation among them on these and related issues.

Mr. Chairman,

To build a prosperous and fair society, based on respect for human rights and the rule of law is not done overnight. We commend our Central Asian partners for the progress they have made during their relatively short period as independent states. Some have made more progress than others.

We are however concerned to see that they still lay behind in the implementation of many OSCE commitments, in particular third dimension commitments. This includes freedom of expression, freedom of the press and of assembly, just to mention the most basic issues.

We are even more concerned to see what we interpret as a lack of commitment to democracy in several of the Central Asian countries.

Mr. Chairman,

Norway will continue to invest in OSCE projects in Central Asia which aim at promoting democracy and the rule of law. This is at the same time our contribution to promoting security, stability and prosperity in the region.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman