



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

NORWEGIAN STATEMENT ON NGOs IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council 6 June 2013

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to offer a couple of observations on the issue of foreign financial support to civil society in the Russian Federation and elsewhere in the OSCE area.

First, we do not question the principle that also NGOs are obliged to follow the legislation in the country in which they operate.

We have however asked questions about the purpose of Russian legislation that inter alia requires NGOs to register as foreign agents if they receive funding from abroad. And we have voiced our concern about the way in which this legislation is being implemented and the consequences of it. We know from our own countries that democracy is dependent upon an active and critical civil society. Any action by the authorities that may – intentionally or unintentionally – curb the activities of the NGOs is therefore not in anybody's interest.

Mr. Chairman,

The Russian Federation has argued that their NGO legislation is comparable to the legislation in other OSCE participating States.

Mr. Chairman, you may know that my government is among those who have a fairly substantive engagement with civil society organizations in other countries. In the five year period from 2009 to 2014 we will use 1.8 million Euros in order to support civil society organizations in 15 European Union countries. No particular legal action has been taken against these organizations.

I can give you another example: In 2011 the Norwegian government allocated around 34 million Euros to US civil society institutions. I may provide those interested in details with a list of the 40 US institutions in question.

Why do we do this? We want to support their projects and activities that are in line with our foreign policy priorities and that may serve as meeting places for Norwegian decision makers with their US colleagues.

Have these 40 American civil society institutions been asked by Washington to register as foreign agents? No.

Have US authorities because of funding from Norway taken any particular interest in them? I don't think so.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.