



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE
HEAD OF THE OSCE MISSION IN MONTENEGRO

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 28 February 2019

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

We welcome Ambassador Maryse Daviet, Head of the OSCE Mission in Montenegro, back to the Permanent Council and thank her for an informative and useful report.

The field missions are essential parts of the OSCE's operational activities. Since 2006, when the participating States decided to transform the OSCE Office in Podgorica into the Mission in Montenegro, the mission has worked with Montenegrin authorities, institutions and civil society in order to support Montenegro in its endeavours to meet agreed OSCE commitments. Over more than 10 years, the Mission has contributed to security, stability and development in Montenegro.

Ambassador Daviet has highlighted the Mission's efforts for gender mainstreaming, stating that gender is a crosscutting theme in all programmes. The support to parliament to increase gender sensitivity is welcome. So too are the efforts at the local level to assist in the implementation of Montenegro's National Action Plan for Gender Equality. Ensuring equal access and opportunities for women is not a mere issue about rights; it is the only way to enable the full economic potential of the population. We would be interested to hear the Mission's assessment of the progress in implementation of the action plan.

The support to the State Election Commission is important and valuable. In line with recommendations from ODIHR, we value the efforts further to professionalise the commission through technical expertise and assistance. We would welcome some further information on how the mission has mainstreamed gender in these activities.

We remain concerned about the opposition's continuing boycott of the parliament. A vital and effective parliament is essential for political stability, rule of law and a thriving democracy. Full and active participation in the parliamentary process, by all

representatives, is necessary to safeguard democracy and the common interest in Montenegro.

Freedom of the media is essential for democracy to thrive. Its protection remains a Norwegian priority. Media can be free only if they are independent. Ensuring independent media can be particularly challenging when there are no clear rules for the use of public funds for advertisement. Therefore, we welcome the progress on the media legal framework and the mission's expert support to this process. In particular, the mission's involvement of civil society, the public, and the media itself is important to instil trust and raise confidence in the ongoing process.

In the context of the OSCE, the engagement of youth has its primary place within the participating States. Efforts should be directed at engaging youth in both national and regional processes. The mission's engagement with the Regional Youth Co-operation Office is one example of how the OSCE supports youth to engage with local institutions, and with the region, to effect real youth interest in the future of their countries. This is valuable. We see comparatively little utility in bringing youth into the oft-deadlocked discussions of the Hofburg.

The work of the Mission is based on co-operation and mutual agreement with Montenegro as its host country. We look forward to continuing partnership between Montenegro and the OSCE to support positive developments and continued good co-operation in Montenegro and throughout the region.