



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO MS INGIBJÖRG GISLADÓTTIR,  
DIRECTOR OF ODIHR

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council  
Vienna, 8 March 2018

*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*

We thank Ms Ingibjörg Gísladóttir, Director of ODIHR, for her comprehensive and useful report, which we received well in time for consideration.

We appreciate the integration of the gender perspective in the report. Identifying the level of female participation in various activities, helps indicate where good work is being done and where more efforts are needed. Such openness is commendable. Still, we must not forget that data is only instrumental to the goal of ensuring equal opportunity and participation; practical measures and direct action are needed. This is particularly clear when considering the participation of Roma and Sinti. Women in these communities are often victims of double discrimination.

We welcome the publication of a practical guide to gender-sensitive legislation and look forward to learning about its use. The responsibility now rests on participating States, drawing on ODIHR's expertise, to make legislative and institutional changes designed to improve women's representation, role and influence in politics.

ODIHR stands at the disposal of participating States for support and assistance. This pertains both to programmatic activities, legal opinions, some made in co-operation with the Venice Commission, and more. However, nowhere is ODIHR's importance as obvious as in its election observation. ODIHR provides professional, independent, and unbiased election observation in our region: 20 participating States were observed last year, 16 of them received support from ODIHR in their efforts to implement electoral recommendations.

In Norway, an Election Expert Team, with members from Kazakhstan, Poland and the United Kingdom, observed the parliamentary elections on 11 September. In co-operation and engagement with ODIHR, we are reviewing and looking to implement their recommendations. An Electoral Law Commission, established in June 2017, has been tasked to address recommendations requiring legislative amendments. We value

the lessons we learn from ODIHR and look forward to availing ourselves of ODIHR's expertise as we move ahead.

ODIHR is an institution for implementation. It is mandated to do what the participating States jointly have asked it to do through consensus decisions. Participating States have mandated ODIHR to take on this work independently under the direction of its Director. The report presented today demonstrates the integrity and professionalism of ODIHR's staff and their steadfast commitment to the implementation of OSCE principles and commitments in co-operation with participating States. We disagree about much in the Permanent Council, but one thing should be clear: We must not let our political disagreements affect the independent work of ODIHR to implement those commitments to which we have all agreed.