



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR ANDREA ORIZO,
HEAD OF THE OSCE MISSION IN SERBIA

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 15 March 2018

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

I thank Ambassador Andrea Orizio, Head of the OSCE Mission in Serbia, for an informative and comprehensive report, which has provided a useful overview of recent activity.

There are several positive developments in Serbia. The OSCE Mission to Serbia deserves credit for its role in promoting OSCE principles and commitments in its support of the Serbian government's reform programme.

It is important, as stated in the report, that measures are taken to ensure that the fast pace of reforms is not detrimental to their quality. Full adherence to international standards through inclusive processes is required to yield the desired outcomes. This is especially important when it comes to the constitutional amendments required to ensure the separation of powers and judicial independence.

Our experience in Europe is that we must safeguard democracy to keep it strong. The support and advice that the OSCE Mission offers the Government of Serbia to successful, watchful progress in this respect, is important.

We welcome the Mission's efforts at gender mainstreaming. The efforts in higher education and municipal planning are both good examples. So, too, is its mentorship programme and the efforts to empower women from marginalized communities. Gender equality is the single most important step to realise equal access to economic opportunities for the whole population.

In Serbia, certain types of crime still disproportionately affect women. We note some positive steps taken to counter this challenge. Such as the continued implementation of 2016's Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence, including the Mission's support to local capacity building to counter domestic and intimate partner violence.

The freedom and independence of the media remain a priority. We commend the OSCE Mission's efforts, in collaboration with the Serbian government, media organisations and civil society, towards transparency on media ownership and revenues. We appreciate the Mission's support to legislation to guarantee a level playing field for media regardless of ownership and affiliation.

The Serbian Parliament has adopted a number of important pieces of legislation on the prevention of money laundering and financing of terrorism. However, as the conclusions of the Financial Action Task Force last month show, challenges remain. The Mission's support to Serbia in combating corruption and organised crime should remain a top priority. This is important also in the context of VERLT.

The efforts of the OSCE Mission to Serbia contribute to regional stability through activities that increase contact and cooperation across national borders. We appreciate and underline the importance of these efforts.