



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE
HEAD OF THE OSCE PRESENCE IN ALBANIA

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 21 November 2019

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair,

I join others in welcoming the Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania, Ambassador Bernd Borchardt, back to the Permanent Council, and thank him for his report.

The OSCE is an arrangement to further our common security, founded on the core values of democracy, the rule of law, indivisible security, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The full enjoyment of these rights for all, irrespective of gender, whether woman or man, majority or minority, is a prerequisite for effective conflict prevention and resolution. They are necessary for achieving security, stability and progress. In general, we appreciate the efforts of the OSCE Presence to supporting Albania's progress to these ends. Still, we would appreciate more result-oriented reporting. The current activity-oriented reporting provides limited information about the impact of the work of the Presence.

In its work, the Presence has put particular emphasis on Albania's reforms such as the comprehensive justice reform and the electoral reform. It is welcome that the Ad hoc parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reform has focused on addressing ODIHR recommendations. In a challenging and polarized political environment, the Presence has offered support to strengthen the parliament's legislative and oversight functions, as well as its administration. In doing so, it has also fostered cross-party cooperation. The Presence deserves credit for including the opposition in this work, and so supporting the constitutional order.

We continue to appreciate the efforts of the Presence in the field of media freedom. One good example is the support to the RFoM that followed an Albanian request to advise on a proposed “anti-defamation package”. This support has the aim of ensuring the package’s alignment with European standards on media freedom and freedom of expression. This shows how OSCE institutions and field operations work in concert to support states in upholding OSCE commitments.

The Presence has worked to strengthen the co-operation and co-ordination between Albania’s national human rights institutions. We trust that this will lead to increased capability to monitor human rights in Albania, even further strengthened by the development of a methodology for human rights monitoring with a special emphasis on the protection of minorities. We look forward to hearing about the prospective targeted activities to result from enhanced monitoring.

The report has a paragraph on efforts for gender equality. While this is important and useful, it only tells part of the story. We would welcome further elaboration on the integration of a gender perspective in all activities. The gender perspective is an important tool for reaching our objectives. Understanding and recognising the specific situations faced by women, is not only a question of equality, but a question of effectively reaching the primary OSCE objectives, such as conflict prevention and comprehensive security. A gender perspective is relevant for the implementation of all OSCE commitments.

Thank you