



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE
CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 9 January 2020

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Chair,

Like previous speakers, we warmly welcome the Prime Minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania, His Excellency Mr. Edi Rama, as Chair-in-Office and thank him for his address to the Permanent Council.

We support the chairmanship's outline for leading the OSCE: to honour our common obligations, to focus on the OSCE's valuable instruments, and to recall the shared responsibility of the participating States. Such a practical approach to "implementing our commitments together" in order to make a difference on the ground, is what this organisation needs. We also broadly agree with the substantive priorities, and especially appreciate the attention given to the women, peace and security agenda and combatting violence against women.

Practical action is certainly required to preserve the OSCE's relevance. The chairmanship can drive such relevance. We look forward to seeing relevance bolstered under Albania's leadership.

Over the last several years, there has emerged an understanding that the chairmanship's main role is to prepare events, leading up to the annual grand finale of the Ministerial Council. On this view, success is measured by the number of events and the number of decisions, while the content of these events and decisions may be of lesser importance.

This view is too simple, because content does matter. Over time, content makes a difference. It is not always the case that something is better than nothing. While one weak decision at an OSCE Ministerial Council makes little difference, several weak decisions over several years unfortunately do. Weak decisions contribute to divergent normative frameworks, and eventually weaker commitments.

In this context, the Bratislava Ministerial Council was a success. We adopted important decisions on the practical functioning of the OSCE, ensuring stability through the upcoming Swedish and Polish chairmanships in 2021 and 2022. The participating States also refrained from adopting weak decisions that would not ensure progress, and the equal applicability, of the human rights for all.

It was neither a failure nor a disappointment that the OSCE did not adopt any such decisions. It was a reminder that the OSCE is only one part of the bigger, international system – a part whose strength, for now, lies elsewhere than to drive the normative agenda.

Chair,

The OSCE's strength is support to implementation. That makes the OSCE relevant and is the reason why Norway has increased its support. Every day thousands of men and women go to work for the OSCE to support states in advancing our common security in all three dimensions in accordance with the principles and norms dating back to the Helsinki Final Act from 1975 that we have all agreed to.

The efforts of these men and women, in co-operation with the participating States, make the OSCE valuable. As a regional arrangement under the UN Charter, the OSCE has a further, full body of relevant commitments ready for its support to implementation at the request of states. After all, the states are the ones to bear the commitments, not the structures that we have used to pass them.

The OSCE is faced with a situation of scarce and diminishing resources. This is contrary to what we, and others, wish to see. In this current reality, we have to use the available resources where they are most productive. This is in line with the Albanian chairmanship's focus on practical implementation.

The Albanian chairmanship deserves full support from all of us. Not only in this hall, but also in all its efforts to strengthen the OSCE, in particular in the field. We will stand with Albania in all efforts to make the OSCE a stronger and better tool for the implementation of common security in our region.