



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE HEAD OF THE  
OSCE MISSION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad to the Permanent Council,  
Vienna, 27 February 2020.

Check against delivery.

I thank the head of the Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ambassador Kathleen Kavalec, for an informative and wide-ranging report on developments and mission activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, providing a useful overview of recent events.

As the Report points out, the reporting period has been characterized by prolonged stalemate in the formation of authorities at the level of state and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as unproductive political dialogue on amending the Election Law, and renewed difficulties concerning the Constitutional Court. Norway remains concerned about these developments.

While Norway continues to hold the view that European integration is the key for stability and a prosperous future for Bosnia and Herzegovina, we recognize that the mission's efforts to support Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example to build institutions and strengthen democracy, have value independently of progress towards this objective.

By the same token, we are concerned, as Ambassador Kavalec reports, that no concrete step forward has been made on the implementation of the 14 points underlined in the European Commission's opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU membership application. Making progress on these issues is not important only as a prerequisite for European integration, but as steps on the way to making Bosnia and Herzegovina a stronger, more democratic, and more prosperous, independent state.

The report includes a section on the work on gender equality, which gives a broad overview of the engagement as well as some indication that gender issues have been mainstreamed, at least partly, in the mission's work on political and economic participation, and the support to law enforcement. We would nonetheless appreciate some indication in the individual thematic sections on how a gender perspective have been integrated. That would help the participating States see whether the Mission's work has been fully mainstreamed in line with the 2004 Gender Action Plan.

The integration of a gender perspective in all activities is an important tool for reaching our objectives more effectively. Understanding and recognising the role of women in conflict is not only about equality: it is about effective conflict prevention. Addressing the specific needs and situations of women is required to reach the OSCE's mission and further objectives. While we have no doubt that Ambassador Kavalec understands the importance of gender mainstreaming, for future reports, we would appreciate some further signs of mainstreaming across all efforts, as well as an assessment of the impact of gender mainstreaming.

Norway supports the OSCE Mission's contribution to democratization in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Norway appreciates the Mission's efforts to improve the electoral laws, to reduce segregation and introduce improvements in the education system. The support to implementing technical rule changes and providing the foundations for future reform is a good example of how the Mission can remain relevant even when political willingness is lacking.

We also appreciate the efforts to combat extremism and radicalization and introduce leadership training, as well as stimulate co-operation between the parliaments in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In general, the priorities of the OSCE's mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina appear to align with the actual needs of the host country. We appreciate that support is provided where it is most needed.

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