



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE
HEAD OF THE OSCE MISSION IN KOSOVO

Delivered by Chargé d’Affaires a.i. Henning Hj. Johansen to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 5 March 2020

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair,

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo remains the key international institution in Kosovo relating to institution and democracy building, and human rights. Today, we thank Ambassador Jan Braathu for another report on progress and the recent political developments.

As decided by its mandate, the Mission in Kosovo cooperates with all key stakeholders, including institutions, communities, and international actors. It offers support and expertise to enhance compliance with good governance and international human rights standards. Through this cooperation, the mission delivers progress and results for Kosovo and the region beyond.

The mission is guided by the importance of bringing about mutual respect and reconciliation among all ethnic groups in Kosovo, and of establishing a viable multi-ethnic society where the rights of each citizen are fully and equally respected. The Mission’s technical advice and assistance in the conduct of the election process in the four northern Kosovo Serb-majority municipalities was important in this regard. The report provides an important overview of the situation in non-Albanian communities and on efforts to prevent ethnic tension.

Strong democratic institutions that safeguard and strengthen the rule of law are necessary in this respect. Norway remains in strong support of the mission’s efforts to strengthen the rule of law in Kosovo, including through monitoring and reporting. The

work of the mission is an important contribution to reducing tension and improving governance throughout the territory. As shown in the report, it brings results.

We were pleased to see that gender issues are reviewed in each of the main mission activities: Human Rights and Communities, Democratisation, and Security and Public Safety. This indicates that the gender perspective has been mainstreamed in each of these programmatic areas. Still, for future reports we would appreciate some more detail on the results and impact of this mainstreaming.

The mission's activity towards the youth of Kosovo is important for reducing barriers between the different groups living in Kosovo and for building a better future for all. The October inter-ethnic youth camp organised by the Mission where youth from Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Vushtrri/Vučitrn, Podujevë/Podujevo, and Skenderaj/Srbica municipalities worked in multi-ethnic teams to design concrete activities promoting inter-community dialogue is worth mentioning. Such activities are particularly important in Kosovo, where the average age is only 26 and almost forty percent of the population is 18 years old or younger.

The Mission's report on *Voluntary Returns in Kosovo*, and its *Property Rights Monitor*, provide overviews of the challenges facing returnees, displaced persons, as well as resident non-majority community members. Perhaps even more importantly in this regard is the assistance given by the Mission to the Kosovo Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning (MESP) in drafting guidelines on the property legalisation process as well as the facilitation of discussions between key stakeholder on the adjudication of fraudulent property claims and the eviction of illegal occupants.

Progress in the dialogue remains essential to normalising relations. Sustainable regional stability and prosperity require comprehensive normalisation of relations, ultimately through a legally binding agreement. The process demands determination, courage, and will to compromise on both sides. In the absence of progress, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo remains as important as ever: As the international community's lead on institution and democracy building, as well as human rights, in Kosovo, the mission performs tasks and achieves results that are valuable on their own. The building of well-functioning democratic institutions has value far beyond its contribution to European integration.

Thank you