



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

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

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 23 July 2020

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Chair,

We join others in welcoming the Head of the OSCE Mission to Skopje, Ambassador Koja, back to the Permanent Council, and thank him for his very comprehensive report.

The Field Operations are cornerstones in OSCE's support to the participating States and the efforts to improve the security and stability in our region. The Mission to Skopje continues to demonstrate its contribution to our common objectives. Over the course of the reporting period, the Mission has assisted the host government in its reform agenda. Even though they were somewhat overshadowed by the ongoing crisis, we did not fail to take note of the important steps North Macedonia made in late March.

We welcome the Missions work to support the continued implementation of the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement and its essential pillars: anti-discrimination, education, decentralisation, equitable representation, also for small communities, and the use of languages. We appreciate the efforts to improve the governance and reform of the security and justice sector, to support rule of law and to build strong institutions based on democratic principles. The work conducted to prevent violent extremism and radicalisation, to strengthen media freedom and to promote a pluralistic media landscape are also commendable.

During the past few months, the Mission has demonstrated its ability to adapt swiftly under rapidly changing and challenging circumstances. We commend the efforts made during the pandemic to support measures to prevent an increase in domestic violence, provide relevant training for police, assist the preparations for a safe parliamentary election, and to strengthen efforts that address the needs of the most vulnerable.

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We have taken note of the Annual Action Plan for gender mainstreaming for 2019, and are pleased to see that the Mission has developed a new Gender Action Plan for 2020 and 2021. Gender mainstreaming and the integration of a gender perspective is a prerequisite for effectively fulfilling the mandate of the Mission. We appreciate the due attention given to these issues in the Mission's activities and in most sectors of the report. Still, we would encourage the Mission also to strengthen its reporting on how a gender perspective has been integrated in programmatic areas such as trafficking in human beings, radicalisation, and violent extremism. In these areas, as in many others, the women and men affected have differing needs and experiences that must be addressed properly.

In conclusion, we reiterate our strong support to ambassador Koja, his staff, and the Mission's mandate and activities. While dependent on the composition and priorities of the government to be formed after the 15 July elections, we are confident that the strong relations and open dialogue with the host government, opposition, and civil society, will allow the Mission to continue working to strengthen stability, social cohesion, co-operation and trust in North Macedonia also in the time to come.

Thank you.