



**ROYAL NORWEGIAN
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**
Minister of Foreign Affairs

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STATEMENT TO THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL OF THE OSCE

Delivered by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ine Eriksen Søreide,
to the Ministerial Council of the OSCE
Milan, 7 December 2018

Madame Chair,

We, the participating states of the OSCE, have explicitly established this Organization as a regional arrangement under the UN charter, making it part of a larger, multilateral, rules-based order to maintain international peace and security.

Our commitments serve to ensure conditions where people can live in true and lasting peace.

However,

- when judiciaries are dismantled,
- human rights defenders are persecuted,
- media freedom restricted and
- organizations are branded as foreign agents,

then citizens cannot fully enjoy the rights and fundamental freedoms that States are bound to guarantee.

When political prisoners remain behind bars, or when those implicated in massive human rights violations go unpunished, it undermines our values.

Gender equality is key to the full enjoyment of rights in our region. It is neither a mere rights-issue nor a gesture to women. But it is a key to progress in all dimensions of the OSCE and to the effectiveness of its executive structures. It is a matter of effectively and sustainably preventing and resolving conflicts. Equality has utility.

Colleagues,

The OSCE commitments are our common heritage and our common safety net. We must recommit to the Helsinki principles.

Madame Chair,

Bringing an end to the unresolved conflicts in the OSCE area remains the most important task for the organization and its biggest potential contribution to regional security.

The conflicts in our region constitute a serious threat to security and stability in the OSCE region and a challenge to the international order. Peace is far more than just the absence of war. We see this daily in Georgia, in Moldova, in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The conflict in Ukraine is moving into its fifth year, and prospects for resolution have never been bleaker than now. Recent escalations around the Azov Sea are exacerbating the level of tension. Norway continues to call on Russia to release the vessel and crew currently detained. As the situation continues to deteriorate, complacency leads to complicity.

Differing perceptions of current and future challenges to security in our region increase the risk of conflict. Taking the OSCE back to its roots, the Structured Dialogue has potential as an arena for political, state-driven, and non-technical discussions on security.

Dear Colleagues,

Let us invest in the OSCE and make use of its entire toolbox. We, the participating states, have many commitments. The OSCE has structures to aid us in fulfilling them. Let us make better use of the instruments we have at hand.

Norway will continue to stay principled – true to international law and our OSCE commitments. In a changing world, we must adjust our policies, not our values.

In a more unpredictable world, we must reinforce the rules, commitments and cooperation that provide stability, and that make up the foundation for international peace and security.