



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO H.E. KAREL SCHWARZENBERG,
THE CZECH MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
29 January 2009

Madam Chairperson,

The Norwegian delegation extends a warm welcome to the Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic, His Excellency Mr. Karel Schwarzenberg, and thanks him for his thoughtful presentation of the priorities of the EU Presidency.

We note again with satisfaction that the EU continues to attach great importance to the OSCE, and welcome the Union's active role and valuable contributions to the work of this organization. I am pleased to note that my country to a remarkable extent shares the underlying goals of the outlined program of the Czech Presidency, and we are also in broad agreement about the means proposed to reach those goals, although many of the measures and events presented are internal to the EU. But we hope to be able to contribute to the effort, both through our participation in common fora, such as the OSCE, and through our privileged relationship with the EU in the European Economic Area (EEA), which in practice also covers relations with third countries to a significant extent.

We welcome the strengthened EU interest and focus on the countries of Eastern Europe and the plans for an Eastern Partnership Launching Summit in May. Drawing on the experience from cooperation with the countries in the Balkans, we believe that the prospects for a closer cooperation and integration with the EU can provide a strong stimulus for further positive developments in the six East European countries, in all three dimensions. We assume that the OSCE will also continue to play a role in these efforts, at least in the immediately foreseeable future, and we look forward to discussing the ideas of the EU concerning the most productive and rational division of labour between the various actors and organisations, exploiting comparative advantages to the full and ensuring the best possible use of scarce resources.

We also warmly welcome the emphasis given to the further integration of the Balkans into the EU, which will also mean integration into the EEA, thereby developing relations with Norway and the other two EEA/EFTA members *pari passu*.

Norway is also, for obvious reasons, very interested in strengthening energy security and transatlantic relations, but we are not sure about to what extent the EU intends to use the OSCE as a forum for these purposes, and we would welcome some clarification on that.

We welcome the stated and firm intention of the EU to give the OSCE its full and rightful role as the main forum for the further discussions on the future of European security, realising that the “OSCE is the main and only platform where any outcomes of the preparatory talks should be finalised”. We also fully share the EU’s views on the framework and preconditions for these discussions; we must stick to the comprehensive concept of security; existing commitments must be respected and strengthened, and we must build on existing institutions and structures.

Norway also concurs with the view expressed by the EU Presidency with regard to need for a continued role for a robust OSCE presence throughout the whole of Georgia, including South Ossetia, and supports fully the efforts undertaken by the Greek chairmanship to this end.

Finally, I would be remiss not to stress the value my Delegation places on the excellent cooperation the so-called likeminded countries (Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Norway) have always enjoyed with the EU at all levels. We would particularly highlight our regular information and consultation meetings with the EU Troika, which were conducted in an exemplary fashion by Ambassador Eric Lebédel under the French Presidency in the last half of 2008. We note with satisfaction that we are already off to a very good start with the Czech Presidency under the leadership of Ambassador Ivan Počuch. These regular contacts are instrumental in our efforts towards reaching our widely shared goals and priorities.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson