



STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE
HEAD OF THE MISSION TO SKOPJE

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 22 November 2018

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Mr. Chair,

The report of the Head of the Mission to Skopje, Ambassador Clemens Koja, has reaffirmed a claim that I repeatedly have brought before the Permanent Council: the clearest examples of the added value of the OSCE are to be found in the field operations. Their professionalism, impartiality and respect for mandates and commitments are essential to achieving our common objectives in co-operation with host countries.

Following in the steps of his able predecessor, Ambassador Koja has taken up his post at a time of great potential for reform, improved neighbourly relations and Euro-Atlantic integration. We welcome him back to the Permanent Council and thank him for a comprehensive report.

The government's reform plans include important steps to improve election administration, strengthen the rule of law, reinforce the independence of regulatory bodies, reform public administration, and promote freedom of the media. These objectives all have inherent value. As the mission's report makes clear, there is both a need and a will for reform in these areas. The OSCE mission has a role in supporting these reforms in line with its mandate.

The mission has clearly mainstreamed a gender perspective into its work on support to professionalise police and law enforcement. This is welcome. Still, there is room to strengthen the reporting on the gender perspective in other programmatic areas: building strong institutions, supporting the rule of law, and cross-dimensional issues such as freedom of the media, countering violent extremism, and countering trafficking.

These are all areas where success requires proper attention to the specific needs, experiences and vulnerabilities of women and girls.

As the report states, the epilogue of the name issue with Greece will mark a defining moment for the future of the country. Guided by OSCE commitments, we welcome that the Mission will encourage the Government to maintain attention also on other key reform areas that contribute to the long-term stability of the country.

Though we were never in doubt about the matter, we appreciate that Ambassador Koja has demonstrated to the Permanent Council that the Mission sees a wider picture of the situation. He, and his staff, may count on our strong support for the mandate and activities of the Mission to Skopje.

Thank you