



STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR ANDREA ORIZO,  
HEAD OF THE OSCE MISSION TO SERBIA

Delivered by First Secretary William Ekås Sæter to the Permanent Council  
Vienna, 14 March 2019

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you, Mr. Chair

As others, we welcome Ambassador Orizio, back to the Permanent Council and thank him for his report.

Serbia continues to pursue its reform agenda, and has in this reporting period notably pledged commitment to media reform and judicial independence. The OSCE Mission to Serbia deserves credit for its role in promoting OSCE principles and commitments in support of the reform programme.

When keeping a fast pace of reform, continuous attention to the quality of reform is important to secure the desired outcomes. Inclusive and consistent processes of consultation on draft laws improve quality and enable improved parliamentary oversight. This is important for all laws, but certainly no less important for those key laws, proposed in 2018, to ensure and safeguard the separation of powers.

The European experience has taught us that we must safeguard democracy to keep it strong. The continued successful, watchful progress of Serbia remains important to the future of democracy in Europe. In this respect, the co-operation between the OSCE Mission and the Government of Serbia is highly appreciated.

One example is the mission's support to a Draft Media Strategy. The development of the strategy was transparent and inclusive, bringing together all stakeholders: government, civil society, academia, as well as the media itself and its associations. The freedom of the media is an essential element of democracy and remains a priority for

Norway. To that end, Norway has supported the mission's efforts to assist in preparing the draft strategy.

We appreciate the ongoing efforts for gender mainstreaming. In addition to including a separate paragraph devoted mainly to gender equality, the mission has reported on gender for several of its efforts, including good governance, regional connectivity, the environment, and engagement in southwestern Serbia.

We strongly welcome that gender mainstreaming to this extent has taken hold in the Mission to Serbia. Still, the goal must not only be reporting on gender mainstreaming across all mission activities, but reporting on the impact that those gender mainstreamed activities have had. After all, the Gender Action Plan recognizes that mainstreaming of a gender perspective is only one of the tools available to achieve the goal that is gender equality.

Countering corruption is important in its own right, but also to the further end of countering transnational threats and organised crime. Following the establishment of new specialised anti-corruption departments within the interior ministry, the prosecution service and the courts, Norway has been pleased to support the mission in building the investigative capacity of these units. As is recognised in the report, civil society and the media play important oversight parts in combatting corruption, which should remain a key priority of the mission.

Norway appreciates the efforts of the OSCE Mission to Serbia to contribute to regional stability. The OSCE is an arrangement that increases contact and cooperation across national borders in our region, so that our common security might best be preserved. We appreciate the efforts made by the Mission of Serbia, its staff, and its head, to this end.

Thank you