



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL DAY TO COMBAT ISLAMOPHOBIA

Delivered by Minister Counsellor Henrik Malvik at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 16 March 2023

Thank you Mr. Chair,

Yesterday we marked the International Day to Combat Islamophobia as established by the United Nations one year ago. This date, the 15th of March also marks four years since the horrendous terrorist attacks on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. This was but one terrible incident targeting Muslims, however, too often, Muslims worldwide face discrimination and hatred based on their religious beliefs. In Norway, attitudes towards religious minorities are in general positive. Nevertheless, surveys show that hostility, prejudice, and negative attitudes towards Muslims and other minorities are a real and growing problem.

This is also the case in many other parts of the OSCE region, where we have experienced an increase in discrimination against and attacks on Muslims. Several terrorist attacks in our region, including the attack on the Al-Noor Mosque outside Oslo in August 2019, have led to many Muslims feeling unsafe.

In 2020, the Norwegian government therefore decided to elaborate an action plan to combat discrimination and hatred towards Muslims. In elaborating the action plan the input from and dialogue with civil society was invaluable. In implementing it, dialogue with civil society and Muslim organizations about the situation for Muslims in Norway will continue and be an integral part.

Mr. Chair,

Norway must be a safe and good country to live in, regardless of religious affiliation. Facilitating dialogue and exchanges of views is one of the Norwegian government's key priorities. The rights of the individual are inviolable, and we will not tolerate any form of oppression. Discrimination is forbidden, and racism and hatred must be addressed.

The significant increase in the diversity of religion or belief in Norway in recent years is enriching for our society, but it also entails and brings discourse and criticism of religion. Such a discourse must also be allowed. The right to express oneself is a prerequisite for democracy and for the freedom of individuals. A free and good society therefore depends on the successful facilitation of a positive exchange of views where all parties show mutual respect.

Mr. Chair,

The OSCE is in possession of tools available to participating States if they want assistance in dealing with issues related to tolerance and non-discrimination. We encourage all States to make use of these tools, and we must all make sure that our structures have the capacity to address these issues properly.

Thank you.