



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE HEAD OF THE
OSCE MISSION TO BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA,
AMBASSADOR BRUCE G. BERTON

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 19 April 2018

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair,

I thank the Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ambassador Bruce G. Berton, for an informative and comprehensive report.

The report states that the political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina has substantially deteriorated at all levels, bringing necessary reforms to a standstill and impeding the adoption of key legislation. Compared to the previous reporting period, there is little substantive progress towards reform.

In particular, no compromise has been reached on the Election Law and the composition of the House of Peoples. Discussions among political parties, facilitated by the international community, have yet to resolve this issue. The inability to compromise on electoral matters may have serious consequences. Resolving differences on the Election Law is imperative to ensure that the General Elections in November can be well executed. Norway is concerned about the current developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in particular about the increasingly divisive political rhetoric and ethnic tension.

Preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalisation that lead to terrorism (VERLT) remain a priority for Norway. The report shows some modest, but welcome progress in this regard. The government of Bosnia and Herzegovina has shown willingness and capability to address the challenge. The Mission has helped organize a number of youth-led activities. The inclusion of youth is one key aspect of a sustainable approach to preventing VERLT. It remains essential to ensure that the implementation of policies to prevent and counter VERLT are fully compliant with human rights and OSCE commitments.

Respect for human rights is essential for reconciliation. Therefore, we commend the Mission on its efforts to fight discrimination. Inclusion of a gender perspective in the

Mission's anti-corruption efforts is one good example of gender mainstreaming. A gender perspective must be mainstreamed in all aspects of the OSCE's work. It is also welcome to see the Mission and ODIHR working with the major political parties to develop party strategies for the promotion of gender equality.

Norway greatly appreciates the Mission's efforts to bolster regional stability through activities fostering cooperation and contact across national borders. In addition to the topics already addressed, the Mission's comprehensive work in areas such as the protection of human rights, strengthening the judiciary, promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination, and inclusive education contribute positively to a challenging political environment. The activities of the field missions, assisting the host country in its implementation of OSCE principles and commitments, remain one of the clearest examples of the added value of this organisation.

Thank you