



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE
HEAD OF THE OSCE MISSION IN KOSOVO**

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 11 October 2018

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair,

In 1999, the participating States decided, and have maintained ever since, that the OSCE Mission in Kosovo takes the international community's lead role in matters relating to institution and democracy building, and human rights in Kosovo. Today, we thank Ambassador Jan Braathu for the most recent report on the progress towards this end.

Many times, I have said that field operations are the clearest example of the added value of the OSCE. This is also true in Kosovo. The mission's mandated cooperation with all key stakeholders – institutions, communities, international actors – offers support and expertise to enhance compliance with good governance and international human rights standards.

We particularly appreciate the steadfast commitment to implementation of the OSCE Gender Action Plan. The OSCE should be exemplary on gender equality. As such, we welcome the efforts to mainstream gender within the structures and working environment of the mission, as well as in the programmatic work. It is appropriate that the gender focal point is part of the senior management of the mission. Gender mainstreaming is a complicated task. Without the proper attention, it is easy to mainstream equality into oblivion. We look forward to future updates on results and impact.

On the programmatic side, the efforts to contribute to equality in the Kosovo Police force constitute an important step towards increased effectiveness in the security sector. For the same reason, the gender perspective integrated into capacity building of the judiciary is important. Gender equality is not merely a normative issue about what is right. It is a tool for the achievement of mission objectives. It allows organisations and societies to function more effectively.

Still, in its thematic evaluation of the implementation of the OSCE Gender Action Plan, the Office of Internal Oversight determined that “many OSCE officials still have a very limited understanding (or no understanding at all) of how the integration of a gender perspective could contribute to achieving the mission objectives.” We are indeed pleased, Ambassador Braathu, that neither you, nor your staff, find yourself among these.

In accordance with its mandate, the mission is guided by the importance of bringing about mutual respect and reconciliation among all ethnic groups in Kosovo and of establishing a viable multi-ethnic society where the rights of each citizen are fully and equally respected. This requires strong democratic institutions that safeguard and strengthen the rule of law. The integration of the judiciary in the north into the national judiciary was a major achievement. Norway supports the work of the mission to strengthen the rule of law in Kosovo, including the monitoring of human rights compliance in the judicial system and the support to the assemblies and to the judiciary.

A few words on the situation in Kosovo: Norway is a firm supporter of the dialogue to normalize relations between Prishtina and Belgrade. A comprehensive normalization of relations, including a legally binding agreement, is essential for sustainable regional stability and prosperity. The process demands determination, courage and will to compromise on both sides. Still, we must remember that the mandate of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo is completely independent of this goal. Institution and democracy building, and adherence to human rights, have inherent value, regardless of progress, or lack thereof, in this dialogue.

Thank you