



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE HEAD OF THE PROGRAM OFFICE IN
DUSHANBE, AMBASSADOR TUULA YRJÖLÄ**

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 17 May 2018

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I am very pleased, once again, to see the Head of the Program Office in Dushanbe, Ambassador Tuula Yrjölä, in the Permanent Council and thank her for her report.

Over the last year, the Program Office has gone through substantial reform, including the implementation of a new mandate that led to ceasing significant parts of the Office's operations. Though Norway regrets the closure of the OSCE's regional Offices in Tajikistan, Ambassador Yrjölä is to be commended for effectively responding to the new situation, refreshing the Office's programmatic portfolio and effectively maintaining support to Tajikistan in its efforts to implement OSCE commitments. The role of the newly established Programme Outreach Unit will be key for continuing effective assistance to Tajikistan. Norway underlines the importance of the new mandate enabling the continuation of the Office's work in all three dimensions, in line with our comprehensive approach to security.

We welcome and support the efforts of the Program Office's to build capacity in Tajikistan against violent extremism and radicalisation that lead to terrorism (VERLT). This includes the support to the implementation of Tajikistan's National Action Plan. It is essential to ensure that both policies and their implementation are fully compliant with human rights and OSCE commitments: violations of the rights of others cannot be met by breaking our commitments.

Preventing and countering VERLT requires an approach that is comprehensive, rights-based, and inclusive. To this extent, the reported inclusion of civil society in capacity building is both necessary and welcome. Additionally, it is impossible effectively to prevent and counter VERLT without taking into account the appropriate gender sensitivities.

Unemployment and poverty cause security challenges. Norway notes the positive developments in the hydroelectric power sector in Tajikistan. There is much potential in this sector, but it must be recognised that energy security in Tajikistan must benefit

the entire population. Energy is one key to economic development and the OSCE energy endeavor in Rasht valley has contributed in this respect.

Norway welcomes the efforts of the Programme Office to mainstream gender in all its activities. The Office also has a high level of gender related activities. Among these are efforts to further women's political participation, gender and police reform, counter domestic violence, and more. Norway maintains a special interest in the Women's Resource Centers, which are also beneficiaries of Norwegian extra-budgetary contributions. We look forward to hearing more about the results and impact of these activities.

A well-functioning security sector enables social and economic development and is necessary for a country's long-term stability. We therefore welcome and support the Office's long-standing support to the national police reform process and the efforts on border management and control.

Along with training through the Border Management and Staff College, these efforts have positively contributed to further regional cooperation. The establishment of a Tajik-Uzbek working group for de-mining of the border area is one important result. A successful clearing of mines in the area would be a significant advance. Further regional co-operation and action would contribute to this end.

The Border Management and Staff College is a continuing success, but also a continuous struggle to finance. The importance of its activities for the entire region, and beyond, must not be underestimated. Maintaining the necessary level of funding for the College remains a common responsibility.

Thank you