



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE
OSCE PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR IN UZBEKISTAN,
AMBASSADOR JOHN MACGREGOR
Vienna, 12 April 2018

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair,

I join others in welcoming the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan, Ambassador John MacGregor, back to the Permanent Council and thank him for the report on the activities of his office.

Norway welcomes and is following with interest Uzbekistan's renewed engagement with its neighbours and with international institutions. We appreciate the demonstrated political will to adhere to and implement OSCE principles and commitments.

These developments are reflected in Ambassador MacGregor's report, which indicates a systematic increase of engagement between Uzbekistan and the Project Co-ordinator. The adoption of a Road Map of Co-operation is one clear and welcome sign of this systematic increase. The Project Co-ordinator must have the required capacity to meet programmatic demand while maintaining the diligent implementation of ongoing projects.

The freedom of expression and the freedom of the media are under pressure in our region; the promotion of these freedoms remains a priority for Norway. Therefore, we welcome the 19th OSCE Central Asia Media Conference held in Uzbekistan last year. Organised by the RFoM together with Uzbekistan, with the support of the Project Co-ordinator, the conference is a good example of cooperation between OSCE Executive Structures and the host country. The journalists present at this conference made recommendations from which national policies on free media would benefit.

Uzbekistan has not been immune to the challenge of VERLT sweeping across our region. We welcome and support the efforts of the Project Co-ordinator to build Uzbekistan's capacity against VERLT. 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. The inclusion of civil society and youth is one key aspect of this

approach. Additionally, it is impossible effectively to prevent and counter VERLT without taking into account the appropriate gender sensitivities.

We note that the Project Co-ordinator reports to be consistently mainstreaming a gender perspective in all projects. Nevertheless, we would appreciate a more thorough review of how the Project Co-ordinator has worked to mainstream this perspective. Examples of specific measures and results would be welcome. Equality will not be reached unless we are able to identify, and draw lessons from, both the progress made and the progress lacking.

Norway looks forward to continuing to see increased engagement between Uzbekistan and the OSCE. The support and assistance offered by the field operations, leading to the implementation of OSCE principles and commitments in co-operation with the host country, are the clearest example of the added value of this organisation. Uzbekistan and the Project Co-ordinator can count on Norway's support to continued and increased co-operation.

Thank you