



**PERMANENT DELEGATION  
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**RESPONSE TO HEAD OF THE OSCE MISSION TO BOSNIA AND  
HERZEGOVINA, AMBASSADOR GARY ROBBINS**

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
7 MAY 2009

Madam Chairperson,

The Norwegian delegation joins the previous speaker in warmly welcoming Ambassador Robbins to the Permanent Council for the first time as the Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Madam Chairperson,

Norway agrees with Ambassador Robbins that Bosnia and Herzegovina is stable but fragile. The development over the last year has not been as positive as we all would have wished, and the political situation gives cause for concern. A cautious optimism at the time of the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU in June 2008 gave way, unfortunately, to a harsher political climate later in the year. Again, we witnessed growing divergences between the three constituent peoples' political representatives about the fundamental issue of the very nature of the statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The picture does, however, also give some grounds for cautious optimism. Limited progress has been made in some important areas, although major issues remain unresolved. Certain benchmarks set by the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board have been fulfilled. The local elections last autumn were, in spite of a confrontational political climate, organised in an efficient and fair manner. Efforts to begin a domestic political dialogue on major issues among party leaders are laudable, although we have yet to see any tangible results. It is of the utmost importance that BiH political leaders seek to resolve differences on the basis of a process of discussion, negotiation and compromise. The objective must be to achieve a

broad political consensus. We urge all political parties to work together in bringing the reform process forward.

Madam Chairperson,

We call on the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities to fulfil all of the five objectives and two conditions of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, in particular respect for the Dayton Peace Accords and the creation of a stable political environment. We agree with the PIC that full implementation of these conditions is a prerequisite for the closure of the Office of the High Representative (OHR) and transition to the EU Special Representative. In order to avoid instability and uncertainty it is important that the EUSR is equipped with a strong mandate and that the Bonn powers are maintained in one form or another in this process of transition.

Madam Chairperson,

We would like to commend the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina for its continuous activities to assist the authorities in their efforts to meet OSCE commitments and progress towards Euro-Atlantic integration. We welcome the positive achievements in the field of promoting military security and stability, and the Mission's tireless work with regard to education reform. As Ambassador Robbins correctly puts it, education remains one of the toughest challenges because the schools are still divided by lingering wartime politics. We also support the Mission's active involvement in voter education and mobilization, as well as in local government reforms. The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina can be assured that Norway will remain committed to supporting its very valuable activities.

In conclusion, Madam Chairperson, we would like to wish Ambassador Robbins, as well as his staff members, every success in their work.