



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 12 December 2019

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Madame Chair,

I would like to congratulate the new Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Madame Marija P. Burić, on her appointment, and welcome her to the Permanent Council. Norway attaches great importance to the efforts and institutions of the Council of Europe. In some areas, the OSCE has much to learn. In particular, the decision to adjust the budget of the Council according to inflation should serve as an inspiration for the OSCE participating states.

We see the Council of Europe's work to promote respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law as fundamental for stable, inclusive and secure societies. Discrimination and exclusion, as well as the lack of enjoyment of human rights, are drivers of instability.

That is why we are concerned when freedom of expression or assembly are restricted, when human rights defenders are prosecuted, or when the freedom of the media, or the free internet, are suppressed. Human rights are under pressure in many participating States. That is a problem not only for the people of those countries, but also for our entire region. Countering this pressure is a challenge we must face and will face.

The Council of Europe and the OSCE share a common vision in promoting tolerance, non-discrimination and social inclusion. We also have common goals in countering violent extremism and radicalisation that can lead to terrorism. The two organisations must continue to keep each other informed of their activities in all areas to ensure maximum results.

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Norway continues to encourage more transparency and more involvement of civil society in the work of the Council of Europe. The annual NGO-conference of the Council of Europe should include participants from more parts of the organisation. This way, NGOs can contribute more actively to the organisation's bodies. This will allow the Council to profit from their input, and it will make the Council's work better known to those concerned. The OSCE has a long-standing tradition of involvement and broad participation of civil society in its meetings and conferences. In this context, the Council of Europe should draw on the OSCE's experience to strengthen interaction.

Many of the areas of responsibility of both the Council of Europe and of the OSCE are important elements in tackling the challenges that we face today. The Council of Europe and the OSCE tackle these challenges from different vantage points, but, still, our values and objectives overlap when we seek to uphold human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in Europe.

Thank you.