



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE
HEAD OF THE MISSION TO SKOPJE

Delivered by Minister Counsellor Henning Hj. Johansen to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 11 July 2019

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair,

The OSCE Mission to Skopje supports the preparation and implementation of reforms that help North Macedonia fulfill its OSCE commitments and improve the lives of its citizens. Against this background, we would like to thank Ambassador Clemens Koja for reporting on the progress towards this end.

The field operations are the clearest example of the benefit of the OSCE, also in North Macedonia. The Mission's key priorities are to support the further implementation of the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement and its essential pillars: anti-discrimination, education, decentralization, equitable representation, also of small communities, and the use of languages. The Mission works continuously with North Macedonian authorities to implement reforms in areas such as elections, democratic policing, local governance and the judiciary.

We appreciate the extensive monitoring work and regular visits to local communities conducted by the Mission, as they maintain the OSCE's relations with political representatives, civil society members, religious leaders and law enforcement officials across North Macedonia.

Gender mainstreaming and the integration of a gender perspective in all activities remain a prerequisite for effectively fulfilling the mandate of the mission. We appreciate the reporting on this in several sections of the report. We welcome its incorporation in both strategic planning and project implementation. The mission has also prepared an Annual Activity Plan for gender mainstreaming in 2019. We look forward to hearing about the results of its implementation.

The report confirms that sound cooperation between the Government and opposition in North Macedonia is possible. It is certainly a positive sign that the opposition has engaged constructively with the government on a number of reforms, including the new anti-corruption law. We believe that broad political debate and discourse must be facilitated in North Macedonia, so that political processes have sufficient legitimacy. Eventually, the risk of further polarization of the society will be limited and that cross-party cooperation will lead to legislative achievements.

Of particular interest is also support of rule of law and independence of institutions, including the judiciary. It is of utmost importance that North Macedonia continues to strengthen rule of law. It is necessary to counteract politicization and the use of political institutions to advance individual interests.

North Macedonia has made significant progress in implementing important reforms. It remains important for the country to maintain progress on its reform agenda. Not only because that is a step on the path to European integration, but because the reforms themselves are prerequisites for a well-functioning society.

Thank you