



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT BY NORWAY IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT BY
THE PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CHAIRMAN-IN-
OFFICE ON COMBATING RACISM, XENOPHOBIA AND
DISCRIMINATION.**

OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna
17 November 2005

Mr. Chairman,

My Delegation joins other delegations in warmly welcoming Ms. Anastasia Crickley, Prof. Gert Weisskirchen and Ambassador Ömur Orhun to the Permanent Council today, and thank them for reporting on the activities that they have undertaken since their last visit to the Permanent Council in April. We also thank them for their presentations this morning.

Norway takes great interest in the work of the three Personal Representatives. They play a vital role in pointing out areas which should be focused for further attention and action in the entire OSCE-region, and they are indeed trouble-shooters, as Prof. Weisskirchen pointed out.

Mr. Chairman,

As my Delegation has emphasized on several occasions, Norway stresses the importance of social harmony and respect among all individuals, without regard to religious belief and cultural background. Norway therefore calls for a strong co-ordination between the representatives, thereby creating the necessary synergy in their work, and that their efforts are closely combined with the work done by the ODIHR Tolerance and Non-discrimination Department, the High Commissioner of National Minorities and the Representative of Media.

Norway also believes that the three Personal Representatives represent an important link between the OSCE institutions and other organizations that fight intolerance. In this regard we found the address by the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the Permanent Council this week valuable indeed. As he pointed out, the images of Islam and Muslims presented in Western Europe have often reflected a general lack of understanding and

proper knowledge of the Islamic faith. And the lack of knowledge, Mr. Chairman, may in turn easily foster prejudices. There is, as Ambassador Ömur Orhun pointed out in his statement, a need to change mentalities. Promoting mutual respect, tolerance and understanding through education of the younger generation, including human rights education is therefor strongly emphasized by the Norwegian government and included in the curricula in Norwegian schools. The issue of education could also serve as a relevant basis for co-operation between the OSCE and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. In this context we consider the conference organized by the Austrian Foreign Ministry, on “Islam in a Pluralistic World,” as one of many important meeting points.

Mr. Chairman,

Norway believes that the Personal Representatives during this year have made very good progress in orienting themselves in the OSCE context. They play an important role in promoting mutual respect and understanding, and in fighting misperceptions and providing better co-ordination of activities against discrimination in our region, including in pointing at the need to focus on root causes and in implementation of commitments and decisions taken by the participating States. Notwithstanding the intention to appoint three Personal Representatives only for a limited transitional period, Norway supports the proposal that they should be able to further consolidate and complete their mandates until the end of 2006. ODIHR can thereafter build on their activities in the Institution’s dedicated efforts in ensuring the implementation of international norms and domestic legislation, and in promoting inter-cultural and inter-faith dialogue.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.