



Statement in Response to the Report of the Head of Mission to Montenegro

Delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 18 May 2023

Mr. Chair,

I join others in welcoming Ambassador Dominique Waag back to the Permanent Council, and thank her for the comprehensive and informative report on the Mission's activities.

This past year has seen an array of political developments in Montenegro, as well as increased inflation, and persistent challenges stemming from a lack of a Unified Budget. Despite what can only be described as exceptionally difficult circumstances, the Mission to Montenegro has shown resilience, conducting its activities skillfully and efficiently.

Norway welcomes the Mission's work to support reforms that will be conducive to Montenegro's European accession process, particularly with regards to assistance on electoral reform, good governance, and the rule of law. The Mission's support to the Parliament of Montenegro, and to the State Election Commission (SEC), are central to increasing election transparency, and to promoting good governance in Montenegro. We view these efforts as indispensable to Montenegro's democratic development, to which Norway remains committed.

We are pleased, in this regard, to see that the ODIHR's election observation mission has been welcomed back to observe the early parliamentary elections in June. We hope that ODIHR's findings from the presidential election earlier this year are addressed, and that the Government of Montenegro continues to ensure that the upcoming elections are competitive, free, and transparent.

In the wake of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, we are pleased to have supported Montenegro in combatting disinformation. Elections are particularly

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vulnerable to disinformation campaigns, and steps must be actively taken to counteract the negative trajectory we have seen globally. Safeguarding the free media, and increasing media literacy in the population, are essential steps. We therefore welcome the Mission's work to strengthen media professionalism in Montenegro.

Mr. Chair,

Norway contributes ExB funding to the Mission's work to mitigate the security risks related to small arms and light weapons (SALW), which helps facilitate the safe and sustainable management of SALW. Norway will continue to support efforts to increase stability and security in the region, and OSCE activities contributing to this end.

We also welcome the Mission's continued prioritization of gender mainstreaming. The Mission's efforts to address the issue of gender-based violence, supporting parliamentary efforts to promote gender sensitivity, as well as its work in monitoring the implementation of the Gender Action Plan, are but some examples of the ways in which the Mission has approached integrating gender across mission-activities.

Colleagues,

We would like to repeat, yet again, that donors to the OSCE field operations have a responsibility to ensure that the field operations can carry out their work efficiently. Providing an adequate budget is an essential element of this.

In addition to providing adequate resources, donor states must also acknowledge that field operations are subjected to the diverging, and often inconsistent, priorities of participating States. This could lead to a fragmented project portfolio, which is inconducive to the work of a field operation.

As participating States, we must address this issue, and ensure that the necessary preconditions are present for the field operations to carry out their work effectively, with long-term impact on the ground as the ultimate goal.

To conclude, I wish Ambassador Waag the best of luck in advancing the work of the Mission, and ask if she will relay our appreciation of the Mission's efforts to the rest of her team. Ambassador Waag, you can rest assured of Norway's steadfast support to the Mission to Montenegro.

Thank you.