



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE**

**Statement in response to the report by the Director of the
Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)**

Delivered by Ambassador Anne- Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 16 March 2023

Mr Chair,

We welcome director Mecacci back to the Permanent Council and thank him for his report. We also thank him and all his colleagues in ODIHR for their invaluable efforts in an extremely demanding year.

We are impressed by the institution's ability to turn quickly when events in the region demanded it. We strongly support human rights monitoring and documentation work by the OSCE. ODIHRs was able to increase and, for some parts establish, activities in Ukraine within a short time span and under demanding circumstances.

We commend the ability to also keep focus on other parts of the region, with strong and consistent activities within for example anti-trafficking, rule of law, assistance to parliaments, combatting hate crime, support to civil society and not least election observation. On our visits to OSCE field operations we hear about good cooperation with ODIHR in implementing mandates agreed with governments in the host countries.

Mr. Chair,

This Council has on many occasions in the past couple of years discussed the state of human rights and rule of law in the Russian federation and Belarus. In a situation of non-compliance and indeed no willingness to cooperate, the human dimension toolbox has proven its importance.

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Human dimension meetings during the past year have given us the opportunity to meet with civil society from these two, as well as other, participating States to discuss the increasingly poor situation for democracy in our region.

The invocation of the Moscow mechanism on several occasions has provided us with important knowledge. Norway has recently appointed a list of Norwegian experts to ODIHRs Moscow Mechanism's list of experts, as the Director called for.

Civic space is the bedrock of an open and inclusive democracy. A safe and enabling environment includes the rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly, and expression. The cooperation with civil society is a unique feature of this organization and must be protected and further developed. This year's HDIM should take place in line with the provisions of this organization.

As Chair of the Informal Working Group on Civil Society Participation, I hope to be able to bring the discussion forward in line with the mandate of this working group. Norway is also proud to co-lead the Civic Space Cohort of the Summit for Democracy, together with the Czech Republic and our civil society partner International Center for Not-for-Profit Law.

Mr.Chair,

We are painfully aware of the difficult economic situation for ODIHR. We applaud ODIHR for its efforts to find innovative solutions when there are no more efficiency gains to be found. However, the responsibility lies with us, the participating States, to provide the solution.

Norway has long advocated for moving away from the Zero Nominal Growth approach, as it is simply not sustainable. With ZNG over many years, the budget is in reality reduced every year. When one participating State even demands further budget cuts, for just one out of the three dimensions, we cannot come to agreement.

Consensus does not mean – and I am afraid I am repeating myself here, but apparently this is necessary – consensus does not mean all succumbing to the demands of one or a few. Consensus is meeting in the middle, finding common ground, a place where no one gets all they wanted, but everyone gets something.

Continued efforts to block the budget at this point more and more look like an attempt to sabotage the work of this organization. Norway will not allow the important work of ODIHR to be weakened.

Thank you!