



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT BY NORWAY IN RESPONSE TO UN ASSISTANT
SECRETARY-GENERAL SIMONOVIC**

As delivered by Councillor Hilde Austad
to the Permanent Council, Vienna, 7 July
2016

Mr Chairman,

We join others in welcoming Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović to today's Permanent Council and thank him for his lucid, although sombre, report on the human rights situation in Ukraine.

We highly value the reports from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which provide a crucial supplement to SMM reports. Unfortunately, they confirm that the human rights situation in the eastern parts of Ukraine is deteriorating. Having surpassed two years of conflict, the situation in eastern Ukraine remains volatile, and it continues to have a severe impact on human rights. 2.5 million Europeans in Crimea and another 2.7 million in rebel-controlled areas of Donbas are living in a human rights no man's land. The freedoms of movement, expression, assembly and association continue to be severely curtailed. Furthermore, the UN can report instances of enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment. In Crimea, Russia as the occupying power has the responsibility for ensuring full respect for human rights.

Mr Chairman,

We share Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović' concern over the conflict situation. The Minsk process remains the only way forward. We call on Russia

and on the rebels to allow international monitors, including importantly the SMM and the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission, full and unobstructed access. We call on the parties to immediately cease hostilities and disengage from the contact line. This will contribute to creating the necessary conditions for full implementation of the Minsk agreements. All parties must respect fundamental principles of international law and OSCE commitments.

We remain hopeful that local elections can take place in a timely manner, but agree that restrictions on freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association cast doubt on the prospects of holding free and fair elections. Close cooperation between the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the SMM and ODIHR will be essential to assess whether the preconditions for elections are met.

Mr Chairman,

We are gravely concerned by the humanitarian situation, especially in areas outside government control. We call on Russia and the separatists it supports to cease all restrictions on humanitarian actors, and allow unhindered humanitarian access. All parties should increase their efforts to improve freedom of movement across the line of contact, cease shelling of crossing points, and agree on opening new crossings as a matter of urgency.

Mr Chairman,

The human rights situation is markedly better in government-controlled areas. A number of positive steps have been taken. Norway welcomes and supports ongoing judicial reforms. We hope that implementation of these reforms will improve the efficiency and independence of the judiciary and contribute to rebuilding its legitimacy among the population.

However, challenges remain also in government-controlled areas. We remain concerned over allegations of unofficial places of detention in the conflict zone and of torture and ill-treatment of detainees. There have been worrying developments related to fundamental freedoms, including use of counter-terrorism legislation and other pretexts to restrict activities of those who may

hold views differing from the authorities. We expect to see substantial improvement on these and other issues.

Mr Chairman,

The transformation of Ukraine to a state governed by rule of law goes hand in hand with adherence to human rights. We commend Ukraine's constructive engagement with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, ODIHR, and other international partners to address systemic and structural issues affecting human rights. As foreign minister Brende underlined during his visit to Kyiv this week, Norway will continue our firm support to Ukraine's efforts in this regard.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.