



**ROYAL NORWEGIAN  
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

*Minister of Foreign Affairs*

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**STATEMENT TO THE  
MINISTERIAL COUNCIL OF THE OSCE**

Delivered by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Anniken Huitfeldt  
Stockholm, 2 December 2021

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Madam Chairperson - Minister of Foreign Affairs Ann Linde. Dear Colleagues:

Former Norwegian Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg often said: “I have been called a coward because I like compromises. I consider that a badge of honour”.

The difficult work of finding common ground requires bravery.

Too many people are experiencing fear and pain due to unresolved conflicts in our region.

Confidence building measures are not adhered to.

Bringing unresolved conflicts to an end and preventing new ones from occurring. This is paramount for the OSCE. And it requires dialogue and commitment.

Over the years we have developed an extensive toolbox. Just like the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs said, politicians should encourage an independent and critical press. This will strengthen our societies.

- It contains confidence building measures.

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- It provides safeguards for national minorities, democratic institutions, human rights and free media.

Yet this toolbox must be actively used by the participating states.

The work done by the OSCE on election monitoring is important. Yet more must be done to strengthen our societies.

- The independence of the judiciary,
- independent trade unions
- and civil society as whole.

These are all central components of the democratic fabric - and need to be protected.

In a changing Europe we must adjust our policies, not our values. We need to recommit to the Helsinki spirit of cooperation.

I wish to thank Ann Linde and her team for the invitation to be here. And congratulate you on your successful chairpersonship – despite the difficulties under the pandemic.

I wish Poland the same success in the year to come.