



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT BY NORWAY IN RESPONSE TO THE HEAD OF THE OSCE MISSION TO SERBIA, AMBASSADOR HANS OLA URSTAD

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, February 28 2008

Mr. Chairman,

Norway welcomes Ambassador Urstad back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his comprehensive report on the activities of the OSCE Mission in Serbia and the overview of the challenging political context in which the Mission is working.

Mr. Chairman,

As stated on 7 February, we commend the Serbian government and people for the smooth running of the 2008 presidential elections, which were assessed as in line with OSCE commitments. The high turnout and the orderly conduct was a testimony to the strong foundation for democracy in Serbia.

We note that Ambassador Urstad assesses the Serbian judiciary as highly competent and professional in its handling of war crime cases. Norway, on her part, is a staunch supporter of international efforts to bring war criminals to justice. While we note that Serbia has made progress in this area, we reiterate our call on the Serbian government to fully cooperate with the ICTY and to arrest and transfer remaining war crime fugitives to The Hague.

Norway welcomes the progress made in the Mission's work to promote the rule of law and reform of the judiciary in Serbia. We would like to underline the important role the Mission plays in police reform and police training. Let me mention the enrolment of the first generation of cadets from the Basic Police Training Centre in Sremska Kamenica, the enhanced capacities of crime scene investigation and forensic laboratories, and the newly-built police training centres in the multi-ethnic region of Southern Serbia. On the other hand, we understand that more work remains to be done and that police accountability remains a challenge.

Norway commends the OSCE mission's activities to consolidate stability and security in the multi-ethnic southern Serbia. Institutional reform efforts have given results, not least reflected through increased integration of the ethnic-Albanian community into state institutions. Furthermore, important contributions are being made in order to make the local police and

judiciary more open, multi-ethnic and professional. We also welcome the Mission's increased activities in the Zandzak region.

We highly value the Mission's activities on media freedom and development and would like to underline the right of Serbian citizens to a free and open flow of information.

We are disappointed that the goals of the Sarajevo Declaration have not been met. It is of vital importance that durable solutions are found for refugees and internally displaced people. We encourage the signatory governments of the Sarajevo Declaration to agree on the outstanding issues involving occupancy and tenancy rights and the con-validation of pension rights. We appreciate the Mission's stated will to continue its engagement to find a fair resolution to these issues.

Mr. Chairman,

We recognize that these are challenging times for the Serbian people and government, yet it is imperative that the rule of law prevails and that the government of Serbia prevents violence. Norway condemns the attacks against foreign embassies. It remains the responsibility of the Government of the Republic of Serbia to protect diplomatic missions and personnel in accordance with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

In closing, let me wish Ambassador Urstad and his highly competent and dedicated staff all the best in their future efforts. We highly value the contribution of the Mission as an important partner in the reform processes in Serbia. Although progress has been made in many areas, more needs to be done in order to reap the full benefits of various reforms. The Mission's announced shift from providing capacity development and legislative expertise to implementation and strategic support seems sensible. We encourage the Serbian government to continue to work very closely with the Mission. Norway, on her part, remains committed to supporting reform and processes of Euro-Atlantic integration for Serbia.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman