



STATEMENT

Response to the Personal Representatives of the OSCE CiO on Combating Anti-Semitism, the Personal Representative of the OSCE CiO on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims and by Personal Representative of the OSCE CiO on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions

Delivered by Ambassador Anne- Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 22 September 2022

Thank you,

Let me join others in thanking all three Personal Representatives for their thorough and timely reports, and welcome ambassador Musa to this Council for the first time.

Mr. Chair,

My country – Norway – is a society of minor differences, with a relatively high level of trust between people, and a high degree of security. The Norwegian population is one of those in Europe with the most positive attitudes towards religious minorities. Having said that, the Personal Representatives point to important challenges of relevance also for my country. My government wants to see a society in which we all enjoy equal opportunities regardless of origin, religion or belief, gender, age, sexual orientation, or disabilities.

Racism and discrimination of all kinds are indeed democratic challenges that hinder opportunities for many people to participate fully in society. We strongly support recommendations for governments to develop comprehensive frameworks to combat hate speech. I would like to ask the Personal Representatives what else, in their views, States should do to increase efforts to combat online hate speech?

In 2020, Norway launched a National Action Plan against racism and discrimination based on ethnicity and religion. The plan points to the fact that racism and discrimination may also be an obstacle to the freedom of religion or belief. The plan is

accompanied by action plans against antisemitism and to combat discrimination and hatred towards Muslims.

Mr. Chair,

Democracy, equality, and participation are values that have helped to create the Norway we know today. These dimensions are not constant but must be created and recreated as part of a joint endeavor. The significant increase in the diversity of religion or belief in Norway in recent years is enriching for our society.

Norway has unfortunately experienced terror attacks, directed towards Muslims and the multiethnic society, and most recently affecting the Norwegian LGBT community. Hate and terror cannot be tolerated. Norway must be a safe and good country to live in for everybody.

Knowledge about attitudes in the population is key to successful responses. In 2022, the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies in Oslo will launch the third population survey on attitudes towards minorities in the country. Facilitating dialogue and exchanges of views is another of the Norwegian government's measures. Freedom of religion and belief is a fundamental human right, but this cannot be used as an argument to prohibit or censor criticism of religion or belief. This discourse is important.

Mr. Chair,

As mentioned, we received ambassador Pacaci to a digital visit in 2020. We would be more than happy to welcome all three Special Representatives to a joint (in person) visit to Norway in order to discuss some of the issues at hand more thoroughly with relevant stake holders.

Finally, I would like to thank professor Polak for her great contribution to the meeting of the Human Dimension Committee this summer. Her participation and willingness to discuss with committee members was greatly appreciated.

I wish the Personal Representatives every success in their work.

Thank you