



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**Norway in response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission
to Georgia, Ambassador Terhi Hakala**

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik

to the Permanent Council, Vienna

13 March 2008

Mr. Chairman,

Norway warmly welcomes the Head of the OSCE Mission to Georgia, Ambassador Terhi Hakala, to the Permanent Council and wants to thank her for a thorough overview of the Mission's work in a wide field.

Let me also thank the Ambassador of Slovenia, speaking on behalf of the EU, for his very substantive comments, which reflect the views of my government to a remarkable extent, allowing a considerable abbreviation of my statement.

Mr. Chairman,

Norway highly appreciates the Missions' assistance to the Georgian authorities in the strengthening of the democratic process, where the promotion of dialogue between the authorities and civil society is an important element. We concur with the priority given to electoral assistance in order to help implement ODIHR's recommendations. A successful conduct of the Parliamentary election in May is a necessary building-block in the development of democracy in Georgia.

Mr. Chairman,

Within the framework of our bilateral co-operation with Georgia, high priority is given to good governance. A Norwegian Rule of law mission consisting of several experts has been at work in Georgia since 2004. Their contribution includes a broad range of activities, thereby supporting the efforts of the OSCE and other missions. Georgia has made great strides in the field of the penitentiary and judiciary system, but there are still important tasks ahead, especially with regard to the independence of the courts. We intend to continue our efforts in this and other important fields.

Mr. Chairman,

Norway firmly believes that respect for democratic values, the rule of law and human rights constitutes a significant prerequisite for a peaceful and viable settlement to Georgia's internal conflicts, and we commend the Mission's efforts in promoting peaceful conflict settlement. We would, once again, reiterate Norway's commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, Norway looks forward to working with Ambassador Hakala and her dedicated and competent staff in the years to come. And the mention of the word "staff" prompts me to join her urgent appeal, seconded also by my Canadian colleague, for a, long overdue, workable solution to the problem of competitive salaries for local staff.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman