



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GEORGIA, H.E. MAIA PANJIKIDZE**

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 10 October 2013

Madam Chair,

Norway warmly welcomes Foreign Minister Panjikidze to the Permanent Council. The situation in Georgia remains an important issue on the agenda of the OSCE, which makes the Minister's presence all the more appreciated.

Madam Chair,

First of all, I would like to commend Georgia for some significant achievements in recent years when it comes to consolidating democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The peaceful change of government following the parliamentary elections last year was not only a milestone in Georgia's own democratic development. It also set an example to the wider region. The handover of power to the opposition is an even more important test of democracy than the elections themselves. Georgia passed this test.

Later this month, the people of Georgia will be going to the polls once more, this time to elect a president. We call on Georgian authorities to address any remaining shortcomings that were identified by election observers at previous elections. We expect Georgian authorities to do their utmost to conduct the upcoming elections in accordance with the highest international standards. We welcome Georgia's active encouragement of international election observation. I am pleased that observers from Norway will be present.

I would also like to commend Georgia's openness to co-operation with the international community in addressing the need for further reforms to consolidate democracy and the respect for human rights. The action plan for co-operation between Georgia and the Council of Europe that is currently being elaborated is a case in point.

We also have very positive experiences from co-operating with Georgia on a bilateral basis in this sphere. One example is the long-standing presence of a team of Norwegian advisers in Tbilisi, which for several years has supported reforms to promote good governance and strengthen the rule of law. Although this engagement now is coming to a close, our support

will continue. Both the Council of Europe and the OSCE are channels that will be considered for continuing our engagement.

Judicial reform and efforts to strengthen the rule of law remain important. One topical issue that will continue to attract international attention is the way representatives of the previous government will be held accountable for activities during their tenure. We expect legal proceedings to be fair, transparent and independent, in full accordance with international standards. Here as in other cases, justice should be pursued in an impartial manner, free from political motivation.

Madam Chair,

With regards to the conflict over the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Norway is concerned about recent activities by Russian security forces to set up fences and barbed-wire obstacles along the administrative boundary lines between the breakaway territories and the rest of Georgia. This “borderisation” leads to humanitarian hardship for the people living in these regions, and does not contribute to reaching a peaceful solution to the conflict.

We call for the “borderisation” activities to cease and the barriers to be removed. We recall our firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders. In this context we also reiterate our appeal to Russia to fulfill its obligations under the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and its subsequent implementing measures.

Madam Chair,

As speakers before me, Norway also remains convinced of the urgent need for a meaningful cross-dimensional OSCE presence throughout Georgia.

Lastly, let me express Norway’s support for Georgia’s continued commitment to European and Euro-Atlantic integration. We look forward to the initiation of the Association Agreement between Georgia and the European Union at the Vilnius Summit of the EU Eastern Partnership. Although not a member of the European Union, Norway welcomes the deepening of relations between the EU and other partners, which are not directed against the interests of any third party.

Thank you Madam Chair.