



PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT BY NORWAY IN RESPONSE TO THE HEAD OF THE OSCE OFFICE
IN TAJIKISTAN, AMBASSADOR VLADIMIR PRYAKHIN

**As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik
to the Permanent Council, Vienna,
14 May 2009**

Thank you, Madam Chairperson,

The Norwegian Delegation warmly welcomes Ambassador Vladimir Pryakhin back to the Council, unfortunately for the last time in his present capacity. We thank him for his comprehensive report, providing us with an excellent overview of main developments in Tajikistan and the OSCE Office's activities over the past year.

We have duly noted that the cooperation between Tajikistan and the OSCE Office has been further strengthened and transformed into a strategic partnership during this period, and that an extensive and structured consultation process has taken place based on the new Mandate of June 2008. We strongly support the Office's activities in assisting Tajikistan in the implementation of its OSCE commitments in all three dimensions.

In particular, Norway remains a strong supporter of the efforts to assist Tajikistan in strengthening border security and management. We have also contributed financially to the Patrol Programming and Leadership Project and the OSCE Border Management Staff College (BMSC). In our opinion, supporting Central Asian participating States in their efforts to strengthen border management and security, as well as the implementation of the MC Decision on OSCE engagement with Afghanistan, constitutes an area of assistance where the OSCE can add real value to the efforts of other international actors. Norway is a strong supporter of coordination of efforts with other actors as when at the field level UNODC and OSCE both participate in regular Border International Group (BIG) meetings in Dushanbe to ensure maximum coordination.

Norway has supported the very successful Small Arms and Light Weapons and Conventional Ammunition Programme (SALW/CA) for Tajikistan through its existence. We hope that the present focus on a national self-sustainable training system and the creation of a regulatory legal framework on incident response will further contribute to the success of the SALW/CA-programme in Tajikistan.

Recognizing the many challenges facing Tajikistan in the economic and environmental area, Norway commends the Office for its work in assisting Tajikistan in addressing environmental threats to security, and its activities in support of water management at the national and at the transboundary level. We fully support the Office's emphasis on further intensifying its assistance to Tajikistan in combating corruption and the launching of a new large-scale cross-dimensional initiative to build capacity for combating corruption in this regard.

Norway shares the concerns of the Office and others about the newly adopted religion law, as well as the need for further democratization and development of the mass media. We encourage the Tajik authorities to allow independent observers full access to prisons, and we hope that a Human Rights Ombudsman will soon be appointed. We fully support the many important activities the Office undertakes in promoting human rights and pluralistic and independent media, in promoting gender awareness and equality, as well with regard to anti-trafficking activities. Norway has further noted that the Office, in cooperation with the authorities and civil society, is working on the implementation of the ODIHR recommendations following the 2005 elections, and we trust these recommendations will be implemented ahead of the parliamentary elections in February 2010.

Since this is Ambassador Pryakhin's last appearance in the Permanent Council, I would like to pay a particularly sincere tribute to him for his outstanding performance over the past six years, first as Head of the Office in Yerevan and then as Head of the Office in Tajikistan. We wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

Like the previous speaker from the USA, I would also like to express our hope and expectation that the competent and dedicated staff of the Office will carry forward his legacy in the same positive spirit.

I thank you, Madam Chairperson.