



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE ADDRESS BY
THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF POLAND

Delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 15 July 2021

Madame Chair,

We are pleased to welcome the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, His Excellency Mr. Zbigniew Rau, to the Permanent Council. We thank him for outlining the priorities for 2022, when Poland will hold the Chair of the OSCE. We also thank the Polish Government for taking on this demanding position next year.

Norway supports the priorities given for the three dimensions and welcomes the main objectives that will guide the Chair-in-Office through 2022. We agree that the peaceful resolution of the conflicts in the OSCE region should rest firmly on top of the agenda also for next year. I will go into detail but focus on the broader OSCE context.

Let me begin with pointing to the increasingly depressing record that is being set this year, as the participating States are seven months overdue in finding consensus on the Unified Budget. We are for the first time starting to discuss the budget for the next year, without having agreed to the current. The stalemate in the budgetary negotiations reduces the overall effectiveness of the OSCE and harms its reputation. We strongly encourage all participating states to join consensus on the Unified Budget and other outstanding issues.

The situation is a symptom of the diverging views and lack of trust among the participating States. This is also manifested in the inability to agree to new and meaningful commitments. Therefore, an incoming Chair should not focus primarily on the quantity or quality of the normative decisions and declarations proposed for the Ministerial Council. The list of existing commitments yet to be implemented is long enough. The success of a Chair-in-Office is also measured by its ability to ensure the proper and practical functioning of the organisation and facilitate dialogue.

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

Norway finds that much of the value of the OSCE lies in its support to the participating States in implementing existing commitments, through the Institutions, the Field Operations, and parts of the Secretariat. For several years, we have witnessed a rather demanding attitude from certain participating States towards the OSCE Institutions. Attempts at limiting their room for manoeuvre must not be allowed to succeed. This also reduces the ability of the institutions to assist other participating States. The Institutions are important not only for the third dimension, but across all three. We therefore welcome the attention of the incoming Chair-in-Office to the Institutions. We also appreciate the role of Poland as host country to ODIHR, as well as for the annual Human Dimension Implementation meeting. Safeguarding the functions and autonomy of the institutions should be a key priority to us all.

As Chair of the Human Dimension Committee, allow me to make some remarks on the third dimension. The current health crisis has posed many and serious challenges to democracy, the rule of law, and whole spectrum of human rights in our region. These values are under threat in several participating states. The full enjoyment of rule of law and human rights, for all, is a prerequisite for effective conflict prevention and resolution. In fact, they are necessary for achieving sustainable security, stability, and progress.

Norway is supportive of the coming Chair's focus on freedom of religion and belief, human rights in the digital sphere, and a human rights in conflict regions, as well as the general focus on youth and vulnerable groups. However, we hope that continued attention could be given to topics such as the freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of the media, and safety of journalists. We also want to see continued focus on gender equality in 2022. A gender perspective is relevant for the implementation of OSCE commitments in all dimensions and will enhance the effect of our efforts.

In closing, Madame Chair, allow me to assure His Excellency of Norway's full support to Poland as OSCE Chair-in-Office for 2022. We wish the best of luck with the preparations.

Thank you.