



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF ODIHR,
H.E. AMBASSADOR JANEZ LENARČIČ

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 13 March 2014

Mr Chairman,

I join others in welcoming ambassador Lenarčič to the Permanent Council, unfortunately for the last time. Let me express our appreciation for the excellent work he and ODIHR have done this past year and our support for their priorities in 2014.

Mr Chairman,

We all agree that there is a clear link between security, stability, human rights and good governance. This is why we have developed an organization with a comprehensive approach to security. We do not need to look far, neither in geography nor in time, to find illustrations of the nexus between human rights and peace and stability.

Participating States that do not live up to our human dimension commitments are not stable. Sometimes we hear – also in our organisation – national security concerns being used as an excuse for failing to respect human rights. The truth is that the basis for lasting stability is to allow everybody to fully enjoy all human rights.

Mr Chairman,

Our institutions are sometimes criticised for an imbalanced approach, for focusing more on participating States east of Vienna than on participating States west of Vienna. This is a meaningless accusation. We must focus on – we must assist – those participating States that face the biggest challenges in implementing their OSCE commitments. Most of them happen to be in the east.

This does not mean that some of us are perfect. We can all do better. Also, my country asks ODIHR for assistance, in particular in our efforts to improve and refine our election legislation and practise. But I really do not see why ODIHR should balance between east and west by diverting its attention – and its limited resources – away from the most acute problems.

Mr Chairman,

This year my country celebrates the 200th Anniversary of our Constitution. The adoption of the constitution in 1814 marked the end of autocracy and the beginning of a long process of democratic development.

In no way can we compare the democracy of Norway today with the political system of the decades following the adoption of the constitution. Developing a democratic society takes time.

When I was a child, Norway had developed into a stable and mature democracy. But the Norwegian democracy of the 1960ies was very different from that of today. Now government is much more transparent, political participation is broader, we have more gender equality, the rights of persons belonging to minorities are more respected, to mention a few examples.

In developing our democracy, we have benefitted from assistance and advice from international organizations. We have been inspired by the example of other countries. And we will continue to make use of ODIHR expertise.

Mr Chairman,

Everything becomes small when compared to the crisis in Ukraine. We have developed the OSCE to ensure peace and stability. We have a toolbox and we must use it. We commend ODIHR for swiftly preparing a Human Rights Assessment Mission, to which we have announced our support. We also welcome the decision to send a robust ODIHR Election Observation Mission to observe the presidential elections in Ukraine in May. We will contribute also to this mission, with long-term as well as short-term observers.

Mr Chairman,

Chairing the Human Dimension Committee has brought me close to ODIHR, its departments, its personnel – and its director.

I know what I am talking about when I say that we can be proud of the competence and the professionalism we have built up in Warsaw. And I understand that those around this table that do not share my views on human rights and democracy are concerned and why they want to curb ODIHR and reduce its autonomy as well as its budget.

If we want to advance the human dimension of our organisation – and thereby also peace and security – we must preserve the autonomy of ODIHR as well as increase its budget.

Ambassador Lenarčič, as Chair of the Human Dimension Committee I am in the fortunate position of looking forward to welcoming you to our meeting on 3 June for a further discussion of pressing human dimension issues.

And I will save my words of thanks and good luck for that occasion.

Thank you