



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE
HEAD OF THE OSCE MISSION IN MONTENEGRO**

Delivered by Chargé d’Affaires a.i. Henning Hj. Johansen to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 5 March 2020

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We welcome Ambassador Maryse Daviet, Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, back to the Permanent Council and thank her for yet an informative and useful report.

The field missions are a cornerstone of the OSCE’s operational activities, and the Mission to Montenegro is no exception. Since 2006, the mission has worked with Montenegrin authorities, institutions, civil society and the media in order to support Montenegro in its endeavours to meet agreed OSCE commitments. Over more than 10 years, the Mission has through its effective work contributed to improved security, stability, and development in Montenegro.

Ambassador Daviet has highlighted the Mission’s efforts for gender mainstreaming, stating that gender is a crosscutting theme in all programmes. Norway commends the emphasis on gender equality at all levels in the Mission. In this respect, the Mission is a pioneer. The support to parliament to increase gender sensitivity is welcome, and the pilot on gender-responsive budgeting is a positive and concrete step forward. The continued efforts at the local level to assist in the implementation of Montenegro’s National Action Plan for Gender Equality is positive. Ensuring equal access and opportunities for women is not a mere issue about rights; it is the only way to enable the full economic potential of the population.

The continued support to the State Election Commission is important and valuable. In line with recommendations from ODIHR, we value the efforts further to professionalise the commission through technical expertise and assistance.

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We remain concerned about the opposition's continuing boycott of the parliament. A vital and effective parliament is essential for political stability, rule of law and a thriving democracy. Full and active participation in the parliamentary process, by all representatives, is necessary to safeguard democracy and the common interest in Montenegro.

Freedom of the media is essential for democracy to thrive. Its protection remains a Norwegian priority. Media can be free only if they are independent. Ensuring independent media can be particularly challenging when there are no clear rules for the use of public funds for advertisement. Therefore, we welcome the continued progress on the legal framework of the media, the mission's expert support, as well as its contribution to ensure an inclusive process.

The Mission has identified "underdeveloped fact-checking" and "disinformation" as risk elements in the media landscape. A responsible and accountable media is essential to raise confidence and ensure public trust. Fake news and manipulation form a threat to all democracies. Enhancing independent fact-checking mechanisms to counter the propagation of fake news might be a step forward to improve confidence in society. Seeing the Mission's work with the media in conjunction with its support to the SEC can be particularly fruitful in the build-up to the parliamentary elections later this year.

The work of the Mission is based on co-operation and mutual agreement with Montenegro as its host country. We look forward to continuing partnership between Montenegro and the OSCE to support positive developments and continued good co-operation in Montenegro and throughout the region.