

**STATEMENT DURING THE FSC SECURITY DIALOGUE: “CODE OF CONDUCT:
DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF ARMED AND SECURITY FORCES”**

As delivered by Military Adviser Colonel Bjørn Gaute Herlyng at the 1107th Meeting of the
Forum for Security Cooperation,
Vienna, 28 May 2025

Mrs. Chair,

Norway fully aligns with the joint statement delivered by Poland. In addition, I would like to make some remarks in my national capacity.

First, let me join the previous speakers in thanking the panelists for their insightful and excellent presentations, as well as response to the questions raised. This is highly appreciated. It was very interesting to learn more about how Ukraine works on implementing the Code of Conduct even in times of war.

Since 24 February 2022, the Ukrainian people have shown remarkable courage and resilience in defending their homeland. The Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security binds us to respond collectively when OSCE norms and commitments are breached. As documented by the OSCE’s Moscow Mechanism, by ODIHR, and by the United Nations, there exists a substantial and growing body of independent, credible evidence attesting to Russia’s ongoing violations of international law.

In accordance with the Code, such breaches are not only of direct and legitimate concern to participating States – they demand continued engagement and clear response. That is why we will continue to reaffirm our support for Ukraine, and to call upon the Russian Federation to cease its aggression, respect international law, and return to the principles enshrined in the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act.

Mrs. Chair,

Norway values the Code of Conduct as one of the most important documents that we have agreed on within the politico-military area in the OSCE. We are fully

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committed to its content and spirit and would like to see all other participating states do the same.

The topic raised by the chair is at the core of the Code of Conduct. According to paragraph 20 of the Code of Conduct “The participating states consider the democratic, political control of military, paramilitary, and internal security forces as well as of intelligence services and the police to be an indispensable element of stability and security. They will further the integration of their armed forces with civil society as an important expression of democracy.”

These principles were well established in Norway long before the development of the OSCE Code of Conduct. It has been a part of the current Norwegian Constitution since 1814 and a part of political traditions going hundreds of years back. How we currently abide to these main principles, how we have organized the armed forces, and the current control mechanisms are described in our Information Exchange on the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, registered under FSC.EMI/113/25, and I will not go further into detail about them here, but focus on the last to guiding questions from the chair.

Mrs. Chair,

Referring to the Chairs guiding questions, I will highlight and expand on a few issues that are working for us and might give useful input or open for discussion with other states.

One important topic in the Code is that of education and training. Norway emphasizes and work extensively on curriculums and practice, to make the provisions of the Code, including international law of Armed Conflict and the individual right and freedoms, an integral part of education and training at all levels and by all categories of personnel. One key basis for this is updated rules and regulations, and I am happy to inform you that an updated version of our manual on the law of armed conflict was published in February this year.

I would also like to promote the Oslo Manual on Select Topics of the Law of Armed Conflict. Whilst not an official document and already five years old, this manual still provides interesting insights and thoughts that could help us develop future regulations and control mechanisms within the OSCE framework.

In addition to these publications, I would like to draw your attention to the formalised, long lasting, tight, and important cooperation the Norwegian Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces have with the Norwegian Red Cross. The Red Cross is a key participant in the Norwegian Total Defence, our way to organize the whole

of society in time of crisis or war. It provides capabilities that we need to train and exercises with, as we do. Equally important, it is a very competent and knowledgeable organisation regarding humanitarian issues and how non-governmental and international organisations work. Without the Red Cross as a strong and challenging partner, also intellectually, it would be much more difficult to provide the proper education and training for our military personnel.

Mrs. Chair,

Education and training are also important in ensuring that military personnel can enjoy and exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms. This requires information about those rights and freedoms and how they are influenced by military requirements. This is an integral part of all military education and training, and of laws and regulations pertaining to military personnel, both covering their status as military personnel and as civilians.

I would like to draw attention to some mechanisms installed to decrease the likelihood of violations of the rules and regulations and to deal with any violations. One key mechanism is strong labour union involvement at all organizational levels and for all categories of personnel, including conscripts during their initial service. These unions are partly important advisory bodies at all levels, in some cases they have direct and formal influence on decisions taken, and they maintain a body of personnel educated in the rights and freedoms of the involved personnel as well as how this can be exercised. Thus, they contribute both to prevention and to handle violations, including bringing issues to civilian courts if necessary.

The Norwegian Ministry of Defence has in recent years put particular emphasis on attitudes, ethical standards and the responsibilities of civil and military leadership in these fields. A specific programme for the entire Norwegian defence sector has been implemented. That includes similar development of doctrine and lead to the establishment of our Centre for Integrity in the defence sector, actions that have provided good results.

Finally, I must mention our Ombudsman system, a key institution to allow for democratic control and for individuals to bring their issues up for discussion and decision. At the highest level the Parliamentary Ombud ("Sivilombudet") gives an opinion in all complaints related to administrative law and processes. In addition to the Parliamentary Ombud, there is a special. The Ombud for the Armed Forces with whom soldiers and servicemen, regardless of ranks, may lodge their complaints regarding their rights as current or former personnel in the Armed Forces. Decisions made by the Ombud for the Armed Forces are issued as advice

to the chain of command and is thus not legally binding. In most cases however, such advice results in a change to the decision and establishes a precedence for future decisions. If not, the assessment of the Ombud will provide essential input if the case is either lifted to a higher level or taken to court.

Mrs. Chair,

Let me again thank you for putting this topic on the agenda. The Code of Conduct is at the core of our efforts in the OSCE to increase security. We hope our Norwegian perspectives can provide some useful input to other states and for our future discussions.

I thank you.