



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE  
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS  
Delivered by Minister Counsellor Henning Hj. Johansen  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna, 12 October 2017

Check Against Delivery.

Mr Chair,

We thank Vice President Beerli of the ICRC for her presentation.

Closer cooperation between regional and humanitarian organizations and civil society is necessary to improve our response to humanitarian needs. And perhaps even more importantly, to be better at preventing humanitarian crisis and conflicts. Through prioritising prevention, preparedness, peaceful conflict resolution, putting the wellbeing and needs of the population first and ensuring their protection when conflicts and emergencies occur we can achieve this.

And here, the ICRC's mandate is at the core. An organization that is able to work at such scale in accordance with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence is a very useful partner for the OSCE.

With the number of recent and on-going armed conflicts and humanitarian crises in the OSCE area in mind, we are concerned by the lack of respect shown by parties to armed conflicts for the obligation to protect civilians. We underline the importance of respect for international humanitarian law and human rights in our region. ICRC's competence, presence and proximity in the field makes it a key partner in this regard.

How people are treated and protected during a conflict or emergency largely determines the post-conflict and recovery process. The ICRC, which has longstanding engagement in many contexts, knows this well.

One issue that affects many people in our region are the fate of those missing due to conflicts and crises, and efforts to restore family links. ICRC does important work in this field, and we hope that all participating States will cooperate fully. We would like to thank the vice-president for the emphasis she put on this in her statement.

Considering the high number of persons detained or otherwise deprived of their liberty, we also call on the parties to respect their obligations to protect such persons, and to allow the ICRC full, safe and unimpeded access.

We are concerned by indiscriminate and disproportionate use of explosive weapons with wide area effect in residential and urban areas. This causes high numbers of civilian casualties and destruction of critical infrastructure on which civilians depend for their survival and livelihood.

The efforts made by the ICRC to deliver humanitarian aid to civilian populations affected by armed conflicts are of vital importance. In particular, we commend the ongoing efforts by the ICRC to deliver humanitarian aid and restore infrastructure in the east of Ukraine, despite the difficulties they face in gaining access to affected areas. In this regard, we underline the obligation by all parties to the conflict to ensure safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to all people in need.

Mr. Chair,

We are alarmed by the attacks and threats against health care personnel in conflicts and emergencies. It is particularly disturbing that access to health care is being deliberately blocked in order to inflict harm on civilians. This is completely unacceptable in humanitarian terms and has long-term consequences for public health.

We commend ICRC's initiative "Health Care in Danger", to which Norway is a partner. Regional organisations, including the OSCE, should engage with this initiative.

Access to education is often highlighted as a key concern among affected populations. We need to do more to provide and protect education during conflict. This includes preventing attacks on educational facilities. We appreciate ICRC's efforts in this regard. We would like to encourage those OSCE participating States that have not already done so, to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration.

Sexual and gender-based violence is disturbingly prevalent, both in armed conflict and in the aftermath of disasters. This is unacceptable and has to be dealt with. We commend the ICRC for identifying clear measures to reduce and eliminate such violence.

Dignity in life, and in death, is what international humanitarian law and human rights standards provide for. Let me conclude by expressing our appreciation for the tireless efforts of the ICRC and of the whole Red Cross - Red Crescent movement to ensure dignity for all people affected by conflicts and emergencies.

Thank you, Mr Chair