



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE HEAD OF MISSION TO
SERBIA, AMBASSADOR JAN BRAATHU

Delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Henrik Malvik at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 22 June 2023

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

Like others we warmly welcome ambassador Braathu back to the Permanent Council and thank him for his comprehensive and informative report on the situation in Serbia and the overview of the Mission's broad portfolio of activities.

Mr. Chair,

Norway stands behind Serbia and the other Western Balkan countries in their Euro-Atlantic ambitions. We will continue to support reforms that increase stability and security in the region, and OSCE activities contributing to this end. Full normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo is necessary, and there is no alternative to the EU-led process, dialogue, and compromise. Norway will continue to contribute to the normalization process between Serbia and Kosovo.

Mr. Chair,

Despite good progress in many sectors, further efforts must be expected in the implementation of Serbia's reform agenda. We encourage strong follow-up of ODIHR's recommendations to bring the conduct of elections fully in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. The working group which was formed a few months ago between the Government and the OSCE to co-ordinate and monitor implementation of these recommendations should commence its work.

The Government's Media Strategy for the period 2021-2025 must also be implemented. The situation for free media is a concern, as we hear of several threats against and attacks on journalists in Serbia. We have taken due note of the concerns expressed by the Representative on Freedom of the Media in this regard. We urge the Serbian authorities to thoroughly investigate all incidents and bring all those responsible to justice. There can be no impunity for such crimes.

We further note that the Mission reports a slower pace of legislative activity compared to the previous legislature. It is commendable that the package of five laws for implementation of the constitutional reform of the judiciary was recently approved by the Assembly of Serbia. We strongly encourage continued work on subsidiary legislation for the implementation of the constitutional reform. It is indeed imperative that the judicial reforms continue.

Mr. Chair,

We commend and support Ambassador Braathu and his team's approach to conduct activities across all three dimensions of security, and in line with the Mission's mandate, the host country's priorities, and in line with OSCE commitments. We would especially like to commend the work done in the Mission-mandated areas such as the rule of law, human and minority rights, media, good governance, promoting gender equality and strengthening the capacities of law enforcement. We appreciate the good partnership with Serbian authorities in the effort to advance Serbia's reform paths and to assist Serbia in meeting its OSCE commitments.

Norway is proud to contribute with extra-budgetary funding to projects prioritized by the Mission. Still, we are conscious of and share the concerns expressed by ambassador Braathu and others in this room regarding budgetary constraints caused by non-approval of Unified Budget Proposals and the practice of monthly allotments. We are cognizant of the negative impact this has had on programmatic activities, leading to postponement or cancellation of projects and staff attrition. We use this opportunity to call on all delegations to do their utmost and be willing to compromise and join consensus on a Unified Budget for 2023.

Mr. Chair,

We highly value the contribution of the Mission as an important partner in the reform processes in Serbia. Although progress has been made in many areas, more needs to be done in order to reap the full benefits of various reforms. We encourage the Serbian authorities to continue to work closely with the Mission.

In conclusion, I wish to commend you, Jan and your team on the dedication and professionalism you show in your daily work, and wish you success in advancing the work of the Mission.

Thank you.