



PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT BY NORWAY IN RESPONSE TO THE HEAD OF THE OSCE CENTRE IN
ASHGABAD, AMBASSADOR IBRAHIM DJIKIC

**As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 15 May 2008**

Mr. Chairman,

The Norwegian delegation warmly welcomes ambassador Djikic to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his extensive report.

Norway is encouraged by the reform initiatives currently taking place in Turkmenistan and the steps taken so far aimed at liberalizing the political system. We welcome the socio-economic transformation which is emerging, and we trust that a main priority will be to further political reforms and enhance the democratization process so that comprehensive rights, freedoms and opportunities are ensured for the benefit of the Turkmen people. The country is still facing many challenges and further progress is called for. Building democratic institutions, empowering civil society, ensuring freedom of the media and developing a sustainable market economy, will all contribute to enhancing security and stability and ensure needed impact on the country's economic development.

Turkmenistan's cooperation with the OSCE Centre is expanding, which will allow the country to advance on issues under all three dimensions. We fully support the Centre in all its activities and encourage the authorities to make good use of the work of the Centre in addressing economic as well as political and security issues in its efforts of transition to a more market-based and fully democratic society.

We welcome the country's increasing openness and its activities in extending its foreign relations. We have duly noted the recently approved Foreign Policy Strategy for 2008-2012 on i.a. strengthening the country's position in international relations and diversification of supplies of Turkmenistan's energy sources to the world markets. Turkmenistan is also providing valuable contributions to regional cooperation. The UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia, which was successfully established in December last year, also testifies to this positive approach.

Mr. Chairman,

Norway appreciates the humanitarian support Turkmenistan is extending to Afghanistan as well as its increased cooperation with Afghanistan on issues of border security. In our opinion Afghanistan's neighbours have an important role to play in helping Afghanistan build a more stable and secure future. Also, Turkmenistan's assistance to Tajikistan during the severe winter which is now behind us, is well worth mentioning.

Turkmenistan has placed significant emphasis on achieving economic reforms and on establishing conditions for increased foreign investments. These steps will be of great importance for the country's further development. International companies have been invited to assess business opportunities in Turkmenistan, particularly in the hydrocarbons sector. We encourage Turkmenistan to seek several international partners, and we hope that the petroleum sector will be an important area in the further bilateral relations between our two countries. It will also constitute a basis for further bilateral cooperation in areas such as education, and notably vocational training. We are also looking forward to continue our cooperation in combating trafficking in human beings.

In closing allow me to thank Ambassador Djikic and his dedicated staff for their untiring efforts in assisting the Turkmen authorities in intensifying efforts on reforms within all three dimensions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.