



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT TO THE OPENING ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE
AND MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS AND TRADE OF
MALTA, HON. DR. IAN BORG**

As delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 25 January 2024

Dear Madame Chair,

It is a pleasure to join previous speakers in welcoming you and your Minister Ian Borg, as our new Chair-in-Office and to pledge our full cooperation with you and your team.

We commend Malta's stance on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. We stand with you in demanding Russia's full and immediate withdrawal from Ukrainian territory.

The essence of the OSCE revolves around fostering peace and promoting cooperation in all three dimensions of security. To divert our focus away from such fundamental breaches with our principles as the ones committed by Russia in Ukraine, would be a contradiction to OSCE's proclaimed role. It's crucial for us to remain proactive in our engagement, to openly condemn any violations of obligations and commitments, and to ensure accountability.

We are particularly inspired by Malta's inclusive approach to security, emphasizing gender mainstreaming and meaningful youth engagement across all dimensions. A country is not truly free and democratic unless it guarantees the fundamental human rights of its citizens to be who they are and to live free, independent lives.

A comprehensive and cross-dimensional approach to security remains at the heart of our OSCE commitments. We are committed to supporting Malta's efforts in utilizing the OSCE's toolkit and expertise, and to strengthening the capacity of Field Operations and institutions to assist host authorities in implementing OSCE principles and commitments. Let me here particularly mention ODIHR's election observation as particularly important to protect our democracies, not least during 2024, which will bring a significant number of elections in OSCE states. I call on all states to use this instrument, and to support ODIHR in this work.

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Madame Chair,

Safeguarding the functionality of the OSCE, including finding solutions for its leadership and budget challenges, is vital. Norway is aligned with Malta's view on the necessity of a consensus on these critical issues. We strongly support your ambition for a swift adoption of the unified budget.

The consensus principle is in the DNA of the OSCE, serving as the bedrock upon which collaborative decisions are made. Still, we cannot allow that the objections of a few leads to the obstruction or potential destruction of the entire organization.

As we engage in open dialogue to enhance security for everyone, we must firmly reject any form of blackmail and not reward aggression or threats. While we have many topics to discuss and need to hear all voices at this table, we need to search for common solutions. I encourage us all to reread the Helsinki decalogue and to remind ourselves of what we all once committed to.

Norway looks forward to working closely with Malta and the Maltese Chairpersonship to realize these objectives.

Thank you, Madame Chair