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**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF
THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS, MR. PETER
MAURER**

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 30 January 2014

Thank you Mr Chairman,

I am very pleased to welcome the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer, to the Permanent Council. First of all Norway would like to take this opportunity to thank the ICRC for the many years of important and fruitful partnership. Norway is a significant contributor to the ICRC, a commitment I am proud to say we intend to continue. In 2013 our support to your organization in fact reached a record high (70.8 million USD).

Mr Chairman,

The ICRC continues to engage fearlessly in highly complex, demanding and dangerous situations. This ability to be present and to deliver humanitarian assistance under the most adverse and extreme circumstances is central to the organization's relevance, and even indispensability, as a humanitarian actor. At the same time, we acknowledge that the ICRC is increasingly left alone in certain areas, with few or no other international organizations present in the field. Although this makes the work of the ICRC even more impressive, it also leaves the organization's staff more vulnerable.

Norway is concerned by the lack of respect shown by many parties to armed conflicts for the humanitarian law obligations on the protection of civilians. We strongly commend the ICRC for your untiring efforts to strengthen the respect for IHL. We would also like to thank you for the support and contributions to our own recent initiative in the field, called "Reclaiming the Protection of Civilians under International Humanitarian Law", which was concluded in a global conference in Oslo in May 2013.

In this context, we are also alarmed by the increasing level of attacks and threats against health care personnel in conflicts and other emergencies. It is particularly disturbing that the blocking of access to health care is deliberately being used as a tool to inflict harm on civilians. We therefore commend the ICRC's initiative on "Health Care in Danger", to which Norway has become a partner.

We encourage all OSCE participating states to work to strengthen the respect for, and protection of, health care in the field.

Mr Chairman,

Norway has for a long time been a prime mover for the strengthening of the response to sexual violence. We are very pleased to see that the ICRC now is at the forefront of such efforts, and we highly commend the organization's work to include this focus in *all* of its programs. In particular, we support the special appeal on strengthening the response to sexual violence in conflict. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the ICRC on its leadership on this issue, and hope this example will inspire further awareness and action on the part of the international community.

Mr Chairman,

The last topic I would like to address is directly relevant to the OSCE's work in the Human Dimension this year, namely human rights in combatting terrorism. It is important to ensure that counter-terrorism objectives do not undermine our humanitarian commitments. As such, the scope and applicability of counter-terrorism laws should not in any way affect humanitarian access to certain regions or populations in need.

Even in the face of threats such as terrorism, or perhaps especially in such situations, we must not lose sight of our obligation to comply with international law, including international human rights and humanitarian law.

Mr Chairman,

Let me conclude by again thanking Mr Maurer and the entire ICRC for the immensely important work they perform every day.

Thank you Mr Chairman.