



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO
THE HEAD OF THE OSCE MISSION IN KOSOVO

As delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 8 September 2016

Thank you Mr Chair, and thank you for your kind words of welcome.

Mr Chair,

Let me also thank Ambassador Schlumberger for his service to the OSCE and the participating States, as this is the last time he addresses the Permanent Council in his present capacity.

The political and economic situation in Kosovo remains concerning, and further consolidation of human rights, democracy and security is necessary. To this end, the OSCE Mission has under the leadership of Ambassador Schlumberger made important and distinct contributions.

As the report of Ambassador Schlumberger makes clear, 2016 has been an eventful year in Kosovo. Some promising developments have taken place, including the entry-into-force of the Stabilization Association Agreement for Kosovo, and the agreement to revitalise the Mitrovica Bridge. However, Kosovo has also, unfortunately, been affected by a series of worrisome and unacceptable acts of politically motivated violence.

Norway is concerned with these developments, as they negatively affect the legislature and other important institutions' ability to function, and as they heighten the risk of yet more serious acts and further escalation.

The OSCE Mission provides crucial support to security and public safety in Kosovo. Norway commends the emphasis on police training development and community policing, as well as the OSCE's contribution to enhancing communities' resilience to violent extremism.

Mr. Chairman,

Further support to good governance and strengthening of the judiciary is urgently needed to prevent and fight problems of corruption and organized crime. We believe that progress on these issues is important to consolidate democracy in Kosovo, and to fulfil the legitimate aspirations of the people of Kosovo for greater safety, better institutions and services, as well as economic prosperity.

As provided by its Mandate, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo has an important role in promoting mutual respect and reconciliation among all ethnic groups in Kosovo and in establishing a viable multi-ethnic society. We welcome the Mission's activities to that end, and emphasize that the basis for a viable multi-ethnic society is that the rights of each citizen are fully and equally respected.

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo has continued to provide support for projects on gender equality. Norway welcomes this focus, as the empowerment of women is critical to realising human rights and achieving sustainable development. Women's empowerment is also important with regards to peace and security, as clearly expressed in the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

We welcome the OSCE's emphasis on monitoring developments related to the safety of journalists, and express our support for efforts to bring perpetrators to justice. Violence against journalists is unacceptable, and an impediment to realising the human right to freedom of expression, which is critical also to the functioning of a democratic society.

Mr Chairman,

Let me conclude by expressing our appreciation for the achievements of Ambassador Schlumberger and his dedicated team in this important work.

Thank you, Mr Chairman