**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE
DEPUTY MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF SWEDEN

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 16 July 2020

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Chair,

We are very pleased to welcome the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden,
Robert Rydberg, to the Permanent Council.

We generally support the outline he has given for leading the OSCE. Among the issues
raised, we would like to mention two that we find important:

- First, the importance of continued and strengthened mainstreaming of a gender
  perspective in all activities as a means to the end of better conflict prevention as
  well as equality for all.

- Second, the importance of making the role of chair more accessible for all
  participating States. Currently, chairing is very costly in terms of both finances
  and human resources. Every participating State should be in a position to be able
  to take on the role as chair.

There is much more with which we agree, but let me instead say something about
broader the context in which the chair will operate.

In January, we lamented the view that has developed on the role of the chair mainly as a preparatory function for events, leading up to the Ministerial Council where a number of more or less inconsequential decisions are adopted. Over time, continuing to adopt decisions of this sort leads to divergent normative frameworks and eventually weaker commitments.

In the OSCE, we have often not even been able to adopt commitments as strong as those adopted without a vote by the General Assembly of the United Nations. This inability persists despite all but one participating State already bearing the commitments in question. It is a mistake to believe that the OSCE is insulated from the commitments of the UN. After all, it is the states that are the bearers of commitments, not the structures we use to pass them.

We can formulate this point as a question: Why spend months of negotiations, and copious political capital, on passing OSCE commitments that are often weaker than the commitments already borne by participating States?

It is in this context that the Bratislava Ministerial Council was a success. There we only adopted decisions on the practical functioning of the OSCE. The participating States also refrained from adopting weak decisions that could contribute to weakening the normative framework of our region. In this spirit, a main priority of the Albanian chairmanship has been the practical implementation of our commitments.

It will be increasingly important to follow up on what the Deputy Minister called getting "back to basics". The basics are about ensuring the OSCE's practical functioning, and about supporting the strengths of the OSCE, which, for now, lie elsewhere than to drive the normative agenda.

The OSCE's strength is support to implementation. Practical efforts of support make the OSCE relevant for the participating States. Every day thousands of men and women go to work for the OSCE field operations, the autonomous institutions, and the secretariat. Every day they support states in advancing our common security in all three dimensions. They do so in accordance with the principles and norms dating back to the Final Act of 1975 that we have all agreed to. Making sure that they have the resources and political space to fulfil their mandates is the most important thing we can do.

We look forward to continue working with Sweden, even more so as they take on as chair of the OSCE. While supporting their priorities, we will work together to maintain the relevance and integrity of the OSCE. This work begins in only two months with the discussions on the Unified Budget for 2021. You can count on our support in your efforts to strengthen and improve the OSCE.

Thank you