



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO REPORT BY THE ACTING HEAD OF
THE OSCE MISSION TO MONTENEGRO**

Delivered by Ambassador Anne- Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 4 March 2021

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madame Chair,

We welcome acting Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, Siv-Katrine Leirtrø, to the Permanent Council and thank her for the submitted report and an informative presentation here today.

2020 was a year of changes in Montenegro which will have long- lasting impact. We saw a democratic transition of power after elections and several actions to increase parliamentary transparency and accountability. These developments have positive effects on the society. At the same time, the COVID19 pandemic has been a heavy burden on a small population.

We recognize that Montenegro, along with most other participating States, has a difficult spring ahead, and we are pleased to see that the OSCE mission has been able not only to adapt to the circumstances, but also to contribute to many areas of the Montenegrin society to remedy some of the effects of the pandemic.

We appreciate that the Mission has increased its cooperation with civil society in various aspects of its work, and we also welcome the level of coordination with other international organizations to achieve complementarity rather than overlap in the work of the different organizations. With a limited budget, it is important to identify those areas where an OSCE mission can give truly added value.

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The Mission in Montenegro continues its important focus on gender equality in all aspects of its work. Ensuring equal access and opportunities for women is not merely about rights; it is in fact the most efficient way of organizing society, and the only way to utilize the full economic potential of the entire population.

We commend the Mission for its support to Montenegro in its efforts to secure broad implementation of its Action Plan for Achieving Gender Equality and other similar strategies. The European Commission's 2020 Report on Montenegro described a lack of progress on freedom of expression and a growing volume of disinformation.

The Mission's work to strengthen competence among journalists and to increase media literacy in society are therefore of high importance, and we hope that this continues to be prioritized.

We also welcome the close cooperation between the Mission and the Police Directorate in the area of combating misuse and trafficking of small arms and light weapons, and in the area of security sector reform, a project which is implemented jointly with the Norwegian Centre for Integrity in Defense.

With only 12% of the police force being female, the cooperation on implementing recruitment strategies is a good example of how both the mission and the Montenegrin government see merit in a focus on gender equality in all parts of society.

We would have appreciated if the report included further reflections on challenges to the Mission's ability to reach its goals and carry out its mandate. Also, more information on how the Mission prioritizes within a limited budget would be valuable information for participating States.

Mdm. Chair,

Norway sees the field missions as one of the main added values of the OSCE. Assisting participating States in upholding our commonly agreed commitments through capacity building and sharing of best practices is worthwhile, and we commend the team in Montenegro for their work.

Thank you