



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PRESENCE IN ALBANIA

As delivered by Ambassador Ellen Svendsen at the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 19 September 2024

Thank you, Madam Chair,

A warm welcome to Ambassador Michel Tarran to the Permanent Council. Thank you to you and your team for this timely report.

We praise the continued efforts of the Presence in Albania in promoting reforms in fields such as rule of law, democracy, human rights, combatting corruption and serious crimes, media freedom, gender equality and representation.

Albania plays an important role in promoting cooperation and stability within the South-Eastern region of Europe and beyond. Let me, as our deputy minister currently visiting Albania, congratulate Albania on concluding its tenure as a non-permanent member of UN Security Council last December, and on its re-election as a member of the UN Human Rights Council for the period of 2024-2026.

Madam Chair,

The Presence plays a key role in monitoring and contributing to the ongoing election reform in Albania, which we are pleased to support. We particularly appreciate efforts to secure gender equality in the reform process. Further implementation of OSCE/ODIHR recommendations and addressing politically sensitive issues related to

the electoral system will be important leading up to the parliamentary elections next year.

Trafficking in human beings remains a source of great concern. The Presence's support to Albanian institutions and civil society in promoting a comprehensive, human rights-based approach to combating trafficking in human beings is laudable. This includes efforts to strengthen Albania's law-enforcement and prosecution capacities and ensuring victim-centered prosecutions,

Madam Chair,

Allow me again to stress the importance of reaching a consensus for a unified budget. While Norway this year signed a new and flexible 4-year cooperation agreement with the OSCE, providing funding for various extra-budgetary projects, including activities in Albania, the lack of an approved unified budget still represents a severe challenge for any OSCE body.

As donors to the OSCE field operations, it is our responsibility and duty to ensure that they can carry out their work effectively. Avoiding fragmentation caused by individual participating States imposing their national priorities on the work of the field operations would also contribute to their effectiveness.

To conclude, I wish Ambassador Tarran and his team the best of luck in advancing the work of the Presence. You can count on Norway's support.

Thank you.