



STATEMENT BY NORWAY IN RESPONSE TO REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA

OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna
16 February 2006

Mr. Chairman,

The Norwegian Delegation would like to thank the Representative of the Freedom of the Media for his report. Freedom of expression is a fundamental right in democratic societies. We appreciate the efforts of Mr. Haraszti and his team in assisting participating States in achieving the OSCE standards in this area.

Another core democratic value is the respect and protection of social, ethnic and religious communities. During the last weeks turbulence related to the caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad one could get the impression that there is a conflict between Freedom of expression and the promotion of inter-religious and inter-cultural respect and tolerance.

We do not believe this to be true. But mutual respect requires knowledge of each others views and fundamental values. The media is an important forum for exchange of views and for minorities in all communities to be heard. Time has come to look forward and use the opportunity to increase our knowledge, both of the value of different religious beliefs and of fundamental democratic values. Knowledge and respect is a prerequisite for finding common ground between us.

One of the great assets of this Organization is the cultural, religious and value-related diversity that we embrace. We are all very proud of this diversity and the possibilities for dialogue across religious and cultural borders that it provides us with. This dialogue is enriched through the partnership with countries in the Mediterranean and in Asia.

All our societies are pluralistic and part of a global community. Our diverse cultural and religious background must be acknowledged and respected. At the same time, a common value base must be nurtured. The OSCE has a comprehensive set of commitments that should be utilised and expanded to meet new challenges to our common security.

Strengthening human dignity is at the core of what this Organisation is all about. And with human dignity comes human security. Our best instrument in trying to achieve a more just and fair world order and solidarity among all people, is strong multilateral institutions, be it the UN or the OSCE. We need organisations with credibility towards the outside world and capacity and understanding for the need to adapt to new developments and challenges.

So what can the OSCE do now? Norway agrees with the Representative of the Freedom of the Media that “the OSCE’s skills in conflict prevention and resolution, and in fostering dialogue, will prove invaluable once again in the wake of the sad events of the past weeks.” We will look more closely at this during our afternoon informal meeting, which my Delegation very much welcomes.

Thank you.