



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE  
INAUGURAL REMARKS OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE OSCE

Delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council  
Vienna, 21 January 2021

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madame Chair,

Madame Secretary General,

We join others in warmly welcoming Secretary General Helga Schmid, in Vienna and in the OSCE, and thank her for her inaugural remarks to the Permanent Council.

The OSCE is an important tool for building trust and security in Europe. However, as all multilateral organisations, the OSCE is experiencing difficulties. Many years of zero nominal growth in the unified budget has led to a reduction in the resources available to the organisation. At the same time, decisions in the Ministerial Council as well as the realities on the ground have increased the workload for the Secretariat, the autonomous institutions and the field missions. We have pointed out at several occasions the slow progress in implementing the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. However, steps in the right direction were made at the Ministerial Council in Tirana in December, not least when appointing women to significant positions.

In short, after a year marked by a global pandemic, the challenges facing the Secretariat are substantial. Norway is convinced that Helga Schmid, with her extensive experience, is the right person to face these challenges.

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For the OSCE as an organisation, polarised views on many issues among the participating states makes it difficult to set a common course. Unresolved conflicts in the OSCE region find participating states on both sides of the conflict lines. There are different understandings of what a comprehensive approach to security means. Participating States attach different priorities to the various commitments we have taken upon ourselves. Under such conditions, the Chairpersonship and the participating States need all the assistance they can get from the Secretary General along side the Secretariat.

Norway will work to strengthen this organisation and rebuild trust in our region. We will also continue to support the executive bodies of the OSCE politically, financially and with secondments. We were encouraged to hear the Secretary General's commitment to a zero-tolerance policy on harassment inside the organisation. This is an approach that will find Norwegian support.

Secretary General Schmid, we have been assured by Norwegian colleagues in Brussels and Oslo that you will be very much missed as our counterpart in the EU. I on my part look forward to a fruitful, transparent and committed cooperation with you in Vienna, to the benefit of the OSCE and its participating states. Let me also seize the opportunity to thank Tuula Yrjölä for filling in this autumn.

Thank you