



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE HEAD OF
THE OSCE MISSION TO SKOPJE**

As delivered by Minister Counsellor Knut-Are Okstad at the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 18 April 2024

Thank you, Madame Chair.

I warmly welcome Ambassador Wahl to the Permanent Council, and thank him for his presentation, and for the Mission's thorough report. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you and your Mission for the support provided during North Macedonia's Chairpersonship last year. 2023 did indeed prove exceptionally challenging for our organization. Your Mission's support to the North Macedonian Chairpersonship therefore came at a critical time, and was highly valued.

Norway welcomes North Macedonia's efforts to align with the EU's common foreign and security policy, which we view as reflective of the country's dedication and commitment to a future EU membership. We commend the country's efforts to strengthen democracy, and to improve conditions for civil society organizations. Yet, we also note the potential for further advancements in the fields of rule of law, democratic governance, police reform, social cohesion, and combating transnational threats.

We note with concern Ambassador Wahl's account of the effect of the lack of an approved Unified Budget on the Mission's programmatic work. While we commend the Mission for its efficiency despite the obvious challenges imposed on it by several years of monthly allotments, we must underline that this situation is not sustainable. It is not sustainable for *this* Mission, nor for any other OSCE field mission.

Colleagues, as participating States, we must take this issue seriously, and provide the space required for the field operations to work more efficiently, with long-term impact on the ground as the ultimate goal. We commend the Mission in Skopje, in this regard, for its well-balanced portfolio in its programmatic activities.

In closing, I wish ambassador Wahl the best of luck in continuing to advance the work of the Mission, and hope he will convey our gratitude to his able team.

Thank you.

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