



STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO
THE COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE,
DUNJA MIJATOVIĆ

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 20 December 2018

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair,

I warmly welcome Ms. Dunja Mijatović back to the Permanent Council, this time as Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe. I thank her for her report and strong messages here today.

The Council of Europe promotes respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law in much of the OSCE region, which are fundamental for stable, inclusive and safe societies. The Council of Europe and the OSCE share a foundation of basic values and principles. Your address, Commissioner, clearly illustrates how extensively the objectives of the Council of Europe and the OSCE overlap.

We appreciate your emphasis on gender equality and women's rights. Tackling gender stereotypes and prejudice is vital for preventing violence against women. Changing these attitudes is essential for increasing women's participation in political and public life, and for reducing the gender pay gap. The Istanbul Convention should serve as both inspiration and aspiration for the OSCE.

The safety of journalists, and of human rights defenders, is essential for democracy to thrive. We remain concerned about the situation in an increasing number of OSCE participating states. We welcome your efforts, within the Council of Europe, for the protection both of journalists and human rights defenders. They also benefit the OSCE.

We should look for ways to strengthen relevant cooperation between the Council of Europe and the OSCE structures and field missions. Sharing information and best practices is a tool for increasing the efficiency and impact of our work, and for avoiding duplication.

On the normative side, it is clear that the OSCE has much to learn from the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe has a strong body of commitments, some also legally binding. We must avoid that the OSCE develops differing, or lower, norms and standards. Such a development will only serve to limit and reduce the relevance of the OSCE.

We have seen for years that the OSCE is unable to reach consensus on issues where either the UN or the Council of Europe – or both – are moving ahead. There is, at least, some solace to be found in knowing that near all participating states of the OSCE are already bound by higher standards. Those commitments remain in force, irrespective of what some participating states are willing, or unwilling, to accept in the context of the OSCE.

Thank you