



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON THE MAX VAN DER STOEL AWARD 2024

As delivered by Ambassador Ellen Svendsen at the Peace Palace,
The Hague, 6 November 2024

Dear Minister, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and Marek Szczygiel, Director of the office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, for hosting this event today at the Peace Palace.

I would also like to pay tribute to the Dutch government for the establishment and sponsorship of the Max van der Stoel award, which honors extraordinary and outstanding achievements aimed at improving the position of national minorities in the OSCE area; a goal that is entirely in line with the legacy of Max van der Stoel and the work he did to establish the institution of HCNM.

Norway has been a long-standing and staunch supporter of the HCNM. Former High Commissioner Knut Vollebæk left a legacy with the organization we are proud of.

As a country with both an indigenous people – the Saami - and several groups with a long-standing attachment to the country, defined as national minority populations, - Norway recognizes the usefulness of tools and recommendations developed by the office of the High Commissioner to assist States in improving sustainable integration of diverse societies.

I am grateful for the opportunity to congratulate Natur og Ungdom as the first Norwegian recipient of the Max van der Stoel award. Natur og Ungdom are recognized for their continued efforts to give young people of all backgrounds a voice in environmental policy and builds bridges among diverse communities.

Civil society plays an important role in Norwegian society and has done so for two hundred years. Maintaining an active civil society is a prerequisite for a functioning, prosperous democracy.

Since 1967, Natur og Ungdom has empowered young people to take action. Through campaigns, workshops, and educational programs, they equip youth with the knowledge and skills to engage in environmental advocacy. This empowerment fosters a sense of responsibility and agency among young people, reminding them that their voices matter. By encouraging active participation in local and national discussions, Natur og Ungdom strengthens democracy and cultivates informed citizens who are committed to creating positive change.

Natur og Ungdom is fighting for a sustainable future. Their dedication to empowering youth, advocating for the environment, and fostering community engagement plays a crucial role in creating a more viable future. Norway greatly values youth participation and firmly believe that young people can contribute substantially to democratically led progress. The youth are not just the future, they are the present.