



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR JAN BRAATHU,
HEAD OF THE OSCE MISSION IN KOSOVO
Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 15 February 2018

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair,

I wish to thank Ambassador Braathu for his report providing a sound, factual overview of recent developments in Kosovo.

The Republic of Kosovo is about to mark the 10th anniversary of the declaration of independence. We commend the substantial progress on the path towards democracy, rule of law and European integration over the last ten years.

Although the period has certainly proved challenging, the report points out that a number of significant policy and legislative initiatives are nevertheless ongoing. It is positive that the government has effectively addressed a number of public concerns and that the Assembly has recovered from the legislative stagnation in recent months. The positive relationship of the cabinet with the Kosovo Serb coalition partner, Srpska Lista, is important in this respect.

However, the report of Ambassador Braathu makes clear that several events of concern have recently taken place in Kosovo. Norway strongly condemns the assassination of the Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanovic. The perpetrators must be brought to justice as soon as possible. Norway remains deeply concerned by the attempt to abrogate the Specialist Chambers law. This action could potentially have derailed the European integration process, and puts Kosovo into question as a reliable European partner. Norway expects and trusts that the governing coalition will co-operate with and support the work of the Specialist Chambers in the future.

Norway also remains concerned about the lack of progress in the EU facilitated dialogue on the normalization of the relations between Kosovo and Serbia. Progress in the dialogue, both on the technical and political levels, is crucial for the future European development of Kosovo. It is clear, as the European Commission has stated, that “Kosovo will benefit considerably from a definitive normalisation agreement with Serbia.”

Mr. Chair,

We appreciate the efforts of gender mainstreaming reflected in the report. As aspects of gender equality and related activities are considered throughout, it certainly indicates that the Mission's work and advocacy contributes to the much-needed implementation of the OSCE Gender Action Plan.

Mr. Chair,

Priority must be given to resolve the border demarcation with Montenegro. As a remaining condition for granting Kosovo visa-free admission to the Schengen area, it stands out as one of the key factors for Kosovo's progress towards European integration. Norway urges the government of Kosovo to show resolve in this matter.

Norway supports the OSCE Mission's important contribution to democratization, minority rights, returns, reconciliation and security throughout Kosovo. The Mission is a trusted and effective international partner on the ground. We welcome the increase in requests for engagement coming from key stakeholders, which indicates the increased relevance of the Mission.

Norway also appreciates the Mission's focus on human and community rights, its engagement on the language area and education, and the Mission's work to facilitate inter-institutional initiative on durable solutions for displaced persons from Kosovo. In addition, the Mission's efforts to contribute to enhancement of access to justice, its support of development of democratic institutions and the Missions' contributions in enhancing security and public safety are highly appreciated.

Finally, I would like to note that the Mission continues to be held in high regard in all communities in Kosovo. This is due to the Mission's track record of professionalism and impartiality. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo is an example of why and how OSCE presence on the ground has added value and relevance.

Thank you