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STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE HEAD OF THE
OSCE PRESENCE IN ALBANIA,
AMBASSADOR BERND BORCHARDT

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 27 September 2018

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

I thank the Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania, Ambassador Bernd Borchardt, for an informative report.

Although the political situation in Albania has been challenging of late, the report points out that a number of significant policy and legislative initiatives are still ongoing.

Norway commends Albania for substantial progress on the path towards democracy, rule of law and European integration over the last year. European integration is the key to stability and economic development for Albania, as well as the other Balkan states. There is no alternative to the European perspective for the future of Albania or for the region. Norway supports Albania in its continued, steady progress in pursuing reforms related to the five key priorities for further European integration.

Albania has made welcome efforts to strengthen relations with neighbouring countries, and actively contributed to increased economic co-operation in the region. Close co-operation between the Balkan states serves the interests of the entire region and beyond. Of specific importance, are the good relations between Albania and Serbia.

One priority for Norway is to prevent and counter violent extremism and radicalisation that lead to terrorism (VERLT). The report indicates several areas of support to Albanian authorities in this area, including to the newly transformed Co-ordination Centre for Countering Violent Extremism, and to capacity building for human rights-based interventions for law enforcement.

Norway welcomes the multi-dimensional and multi-stakeholder approach advocated by the OSCE Presence to address VERLT. Addressing VERLT requires an approach that is comprehensive, rights-based, and inclusive. It remains essential to ensure that the implementation of policies against VERLT are fully compliant with human rights and OSCE commitments. The appropriate gender perspective must be integrated.

The Presence conducts welcome activities on promoting gender equality. Examples being the support provided to members of the Alliance of Women Parliamentarians, and the work done to mainstream gender in the Electoral Code Reform. Though it is important to support women elected to office, efforts to further women's political participation should also aim to increase female participation as such. Efforts for further recruitment being one avenue. We look forward to the assessment of the Presence of the impact of its efforts to increase the political participation of women.

The Presence has admirably helped facilitate the Albanian Government's first National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Still, we would appreciate further reporting on how the Presence has worked to integrate a gender perspective in the rest of its activities, for example in its work on justice and security sector reform. Particularly, Norway is interested to hear the Presence assess how the integration of a gender perspective contributes to the success of its mission objectives.

Norway is committed to supporting regional stabilization, normalization of the relations between Albania and its neighbors, as well as economic development. The OSCE Presence in Albania contributes in high priority areas such as promoting the rule of law, protecting the human rights, and aiding the fight against corruption and organized crime. This is highly valued by Norway. In the activities of the field missions, in cooperation with the host countries, we can clearly see the added value of the OSCE.