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PC.DEL/639/24
24 May 2024

ENGLISH only

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE OSCE PROGRAMME
OFFICE IN BISHKEK AND THE DIRECTOR OF THE OSCE ACADEMY IN
BISHKEK**

Full statement by Minister Counsellor Knut-Are Orstad at the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 23 May 2024

Thank you, Madam Chair,

I join others in welcoming Ambassador Rogov and Dr. Walker to the Permanent Council and thank them for their reports.

Let me start by expressing my appreciation for the long-standing good spirit of cooperation between the Kyrgyz Republic and both the OSCE and Norway. For the Programme Office to implement its mandate, the importance of mutual trust and positive relations with the Kyrgyz authorities cannot be overstated.

Norway supports the Programme Office's work across all security dimensions, particularly in enhancing democratic processes, national and cross-border security, gender equality, the rule of law, climate change mitigation, and economic development.

As an Arctic country, a mountainous country, Norway shares Kyrgyzstan's concerns about melting glaciers and the long-term consequences of climate change. We will continue to exchange experience and best practices on how to deal with such challenges, through the OSCE.

Our delegation also greatly appreciated the opportunity for one of our staff to visit the Programme Office's premises in Bishkek last week.

Madam Chair,

Regarding the current political situation in the Kyrgyz Republic, Norway shares concerns over recent developments. The law on foreign representatives, which was adopted in April, could severely threaten the working conditions of numerous Kyrgyz civil society organizations. We also share concerns about the ramifications for the work of both the Programme Office and the OSCE Academy.

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As a longstanding contributor to the work of the OSCE in Kyrgyzstan, we emphasize that respect for fundamental human rights, a free and independent media, and a vibrant civil society are prerequisites for peace, stability, and sustainable development – both in the Kyrgyz Republic and any other OSCE participating State.

As we all know, the OSCE and its institutions have a wide array of tools and expertise to help us as participating States to deliver on our common commitments.

Dr. Walker,

Once again, congratulations on your appointment as director.

The OSCE Academy is truly a flagship institution for this organization, serving not only the students but also bolstering regional cooperation and integration.

Since its establishment, Norway has been a strong supporter and donor to the Academy, with the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, NUPI, as our main partner.

We recently signed a new cooperation agreement between the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NUPI, and the Academy, and we look forward to continuing the productive partnership. While it would have been desirable for the Academy to be funded through the unified budget, we realize this may be unrealistic given the current budget negotiations.

One of the biggest current issues is the need for new and larger premises to facilitate the increasing number of students. We appreciate the efforts made by the Kyrgyz authorities to this end.

Madam Chair,

Allow me again to stress the importance of reaching a consensus for a unified budget. While Norway recently signed a new and flexible 4-year cooperation agreement with the OSCE, providing funding for various extra-budgetary projects, including activities in the Kyrgyz Republic, the lack of an approved unified budget represents a severe challenge for any OSCE body.

Thank you for pointing out the consequences for the Programme Office in Bishkek of the past years' failed attempts to adopt a unified budget, Ambassador Rogov.

As donors to the OSCE field operations, it is our responsibility and duty to ensure that they can carry out their work effectively. Avoiding the fragmentation caused by individual participating States imposing their national priorities on the work of the field operations, would also contribute to their effectiveness.

Needless to say, Norway will continue to call on all participating States to approach the ongoing budget negotiations in good faith.

Thank you.