



ROYAL NORWEGIAN  
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

*Minister of Foreign Affairs*

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STATEMENT TO THE  
MINISTERIAL COUNCIL OF THE OSCE

Delivered by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ine Eriksen Søreide,  
Tirana, 4 December 2020

Mr Chairman, Prime Minister Rama, Colleagues,

I would first like to echo my colleagues and thank the Albanian chairmanship for its tireless, impressive efforts during a particularly challenging period.

2020 has indeed been a difficult year. Both the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflicts in the OSCE area clearly illustrate the need for multilateral diplomacy in our region.

The OSCE missions in many countries have made solid contributions under difficult circumstances. However, several conflicts remain unresolved and must remain high on the OSCE agenda:

Russia still occupies Crimea and supports armed groups in Donbas.

In Georgia, the borderisation of the occupied regions continues.

The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh has led to widespread destruction and deprivation. The ceasefire agreement must be respected. The OSCE stands ready to use its extensive toolbox to address the situation, if we, the participating states, agree to it.

In Belarus, the protests against the presidential elections in August are continuing. Norway was among the countries that invoked the Moscow Mechanism. The rapporteur's report has clearly documented the extent of the human rights abuses committed against the population. We are deeply

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concerned about the state of democracy and about the security of those who exercise their right to protest peacefully.

The pandemic has limited ODIHR's ability to supervise election processes. At the same time, there have been challenges to democracy in several states, and there is an increasing need for ODIHR support in participating states.

The OSCE is also facing challenges in the area of conventional arms control and confidence-building. Norway will continue to participate constructively within the existing regimes. We stand ready to contribute to possible talks on future conventional arms control in Europe. The OSCE still has an important role to play in this respect. At the same time, we are disappointed that the participating states could not reach agreement on a commitment to implement the women, peace and security agenda in the politico-military dimension of this organisation. We have not achieved security until there is security for all.

45 years have passed since the Helsinki Final Act was signed, marking the first time peace and security issues were combined with economy and human rights issues. This makes the OSCE unique. Next year, Norway will assume the chairmanship of the Human Dimension Committee. Our aim is to increase trust and dialogue in this field of the OSCE's work.

Colleagues,

Let us re-commit to the Helsinki spirit of cooperation. The most fundamental tasks of this organisation remain to bring unresolved conflicts to an end, and to prevent new conflicts from breaking out.

We should not let unrelated grudges or interests prevent us from agreeing on matters that will contribute to our common security and progress. We should not shy away from open and frank discussions on difficult topics. But we need to refrain from actions that divide us.

To succeed, we need resources, and we need political will.

I urge participating states to give the leaders who are to be appointed later today the support needed to allow them to fulfil their mandates and assist us all in respecting our commitments. I welcome Helga Schmid at the steering wheel as a very solid Secretary General, working together with competent leaders in new positions. I congratulate you all on your appointments.

I wish Sweden and Ann every success in their coming presidency – we look forward to our cooperation.

Thank you.