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STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE HEAD OF THE PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR IN UZBEKISTAN

As delivered by ambassador Ellen Svendsen at the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 31 October 2024

Thank you, Madame Chair.

I would like to welcome Ambassador Antti Karttunen to the Permanent Council for the first time in his new capacity as OSCE Project Co-ordinator (Head of the Office) and thank him and his team for the comprehensive report on activities conducted since March 2023, as well for an excellent presentation.

While the report gives a substantial overview of the office's activities, I will only comment on a few.

First of all, we commend the cooperation between the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan and the host country authorities across all three dimensions. This cooperation demonstrates how OSCE field missions effectively contribute to capacity building in line with its mandate, shared commitments, and host country priorities.

Norway appreciates the strong coordination with international partners and organizations, as well as the approach of using the resources and expertise within OSCE institutions and executive structures throughout your activities. To facilitate for a lasting impact, we are pleased to find that the Project Co-ordinator continues to include civil society participation in their activities.

We value the effort to prevent and counter violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT) as vital for the Central Asian region. Norway values your comprehensive approach to combatting extremism, which includes not only the individuals themselves but also their family members, creating a solid foundation for successful reintegration into society.

We highly appreciate the Project Co-ordinator's emphasis on gender equality throughout his report, which Norway proudly supports through our extra-budgetary funding.

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Making sure that gender mainstreaming is included in all aspects of the office's work will significantly improve its output. Further, Norway values the activities related to future security challenges, including Cyber and environmental changes, as well as the effort to engage youth.

The report has clearly shown the impact a OSCE mission can have. In this context, I urge all delegations to do their utmost and show willingness to compromise to join consensus on a Unified Budget for both 2024, and 2025.

In conclusion, allow me to draw attention to the Parliamentary Elections held in Uzbekistan on Saturday, October 27th. We commend the ODIHR's preliminary conclusions which indicate an increase in female participation, technical improvements and efficient electoral preparations. However, significant challenges persist in meeting international standards, including allowing for participation of political opposition. We trust that the Project Co-ordinator will keep focusing on advancing the electoral legal framework in line with OSCE commitments to democratic election standards, in close cooperation with ODIHR.

Thank you.