



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE  
REPORT OF THE MISSION TO BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Delivered by Ambassador Anne- Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council  
Vienna, 30 March 2023

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

I welcome ambassador Aggeler to the Permanent Council and thank him for his presentation as well as for the Mission's written report. We commend the Mission for its efficiency despite the obvious challenges imposed on it by the lacking budget agreement.

Norway supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as one State, comprised of two entities and the Brčko-District.

We welcome the peaceful conduct of the General elections last October. The swift formation of government at state and Republika Srpska level was encouraging. We hope the election results will soon be implemented also on Federation level. The Mission's support to improving the electoral process in Bosnia and Herzegovina in line with ODIHR recommendations is important.

We note that the country is still facing serious challenges; continued political crisis," brain-drain", and lack of reform progress. We are concerned by the recent amendments to the Republika Srpska criminal code which criminalizes defamation. We call on the Republika Srpska to withdraw the amendments, and to secure freedom of expression and freedom of press. We are also concerned by recent attacks against members of the LGBT+ community and urge authorities to ensure the security and human rights of this community.

The deteriorated security situation in Europe with Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine makes stability and democratic progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Western Balkans even more important. Norway will continue to support reforms that increase stability and security in the region. The continued work of Operation EUFOR Althea is key to maintaining a safe and secure environment for all citizens of the country.

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Mr. Chair,

We are pleased to contribute to the new long-term project on intelligence-led policing and look forward to seeing its results both short term and by the end of its five-year project period. The same goes for the new project on hate crimes underreporting. We hope results of this project can inform the Mission's programming in a good way.

We appreciate the Mission's focus on gender equality and on gender mainstreaming across dimensions and activities of the field operations. I would like to ask ambassador Aggeler how the Mission works with gender mainstreaming in projects that are not directly related to gender equality?

Colleagues,

As donors to the OSCE field operations, it is our responsibility and duty to ensure that they can carry out their work effectively. Providing a sufficient budget is of course one cornerstone. But field operations are also subjected to the diverging, and often inconsistent, priorities of participating States. This leads to fragmentation of the project portfolio, which is uncondusive to the work of a field operation. The fragmentation creates a focus on a list of activities rather than on main objectives and overarching results.

As participating States, we must take this challenge seriously, and provide the space required for the field operations to work more efficiently, with long-term impact on the ground as their focus.

Thank you.