



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT BY NORWAY IN RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR
CHRISTIAN STROHAL
OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna
1 February 2007**

Norway joins others in warmly welcoming Ambassador Strohal back to the Permanent Council. We fully support his scheme and priorities for 2007 in building and strengthening democracy throughout the OSCE area.

We appreciate the commitment to follow up on Ministerial decision 19/06, and use this occasion to again thank ODIHR for last year's thorough report with the appropriate title "Common Responsibility - Commitments and Implementation".

Norway holds the election-related activities of ODIHR as well as its methodology in high regard. The work is carried out in a professional and balanced way leading to objective conclusions. ODIHR's autonomy must be preserved. In our view autonomy equals impartiality.

It is our hope that the upcoming elections in Turkmenistan will mark the beginning of a strengthened relationship with the ODIHR. We welcome the invitation by the authorities and encourage enhanced cooperation for the benefit of the people of Turkmenistan.

Mr. Chairman, Norway believes that the Human Dimension Committee can be an excellent forum for dialogue and to address challenges in implementing our commitments. We thank the Spanish chairmanship for taking an active lead in this regard.

We count on ODIHR's support for the work in the Committee, and hope that ODIHR representatives can take part in our informal deliberations. As indicated before, Norway agrees with ambassador Strohal that the Committee can discuss the follow up to recommendations in election observation reports.

Mr. Chairman,

We need to maintain our focus on the respect for human rights, freedom of press and freedom of association, and therefore welcome the planned Human Dimension Seminar on "Political parties and Civil Society". Furthermore, we hope to achieve consensus on devoting one of the Special days at HDIM to Human Right Defenders.

At the same time, we must continue our comprehensive and proactive strategy for combating trafficking in human beings. Up to now, human trafficking has mainly been linked with sexual exploitation, but the focus should also be directed at trafficking for forced labour.

Women's role in confidence building and conflict resolution must be recognised and built upon. It is our hope that a Human Dimension Seminar on "Gender and Security" will trigger new ideas and thoughts on how to encounter these challenges.

In closing, I would like to underline our appreciation and strong support to ODIHR. Norway looks forward to working closely with ambassador Strohal and his dedicated team in 2007.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.