



PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR CHRISTIAN STROHAL

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
1 November 2007

Mr. Chairman,

The Norwegian Delegation warmly welcomes Ambassador Strohal back to the Permanent Council. We thank him for his presentation; and we appreciate his comprehensive report on the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting as well as his remarks on the ongoing implementation of Ministerial Decision 19/06 on strengthening the effectiveness of the OSCE.

The Human Dimension Implementation meeting is certainly one of the most important events in the OSCE calendar for taking stock on where we as participating States stand on the implementation of OSCE commitments. The message emerging from the various debates was that progress is still called for, and that political will to adhere to these commitments is an important precondition for progress.

This year again, the active participation of a high number of NGOs provided valuable inputs to our discussions. We are concerned about the working conditions for NGOs in a number of participating states. Norway remains firmly committed to an active and extensive NGO participation in OSCE events along the existing modalities as set out in the Helsinki Document of 1992.

In this respect, Norway would like to see further focus and support to Human Rights Defenders, as a fundamental element of a strong civil society. We strongly support a Ministerial Decision on Human Right Defenders.

Mr. Chairman,

Free and fair elections are fundamental for democracy. Let me once again commend the ODIHR for its internationally recognised methodology in election observation. Norway fully supports the ODIHR's professional and impartial role and expertise in this area. All the participating states have voluntarily entered into election related commitments. We call on all participating states to wholeheartedly work together with the ODIHR during the entire election process and to put the recommendations of ODIHR into practice. Norway is pleased to note the ODIHR's progress in implementing Ministerial Council Decision 19/06. We are supportive of the efforts being made to promote diversification in the election monitoring teams, and we encourage further efforts to promote geographical diversity in the appointments of Heads of Observation Missions. I am pleased to announce that Norway again intends to contribute to the voluntary Fund for Diversification in the coming year.

I would like to underline the need for constructive cooperation between the Parliamentary Assembly and the ODIHR.

Mr. Chairman,

A substantial body of commitments has been accumulated over the years within the human dimension of the OSCE. Correspondingly the workload of the ODIHR has steadily been increasing. I would therefore take this opportunity to again underline our responsibility to provide the resources necessary to make it possible to implement our recommendations and decisions in practice. This should particularly be kept in mind in our ongoing discussions on the 2008 Unified Budget, which Norway supports.

Finally Mr. Chairman,

Norway will continue its close cooperation with Ambassador Strohal and his dedicated and competent staff.

I thank you