



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
18 December 2008

Mr. Chairman,

Echoing the remarks of the EU at our meeting last week, Norway is also very concerned about the search of the St. Petersburg offices of the non-governmental organisation Memorial on 4 December 2008. This seems to be the latest example of a worrying development when it comes to freedom of association and expression in the Russian Federation.

Memorial is a highly respected non-governmental organisation, whose work to safeguard the memory of the victims of totalitarian repression under Stalin's regime contributes actively to shedding necessary light on this most tragic period. The role of Memorial in protecting human rights is widely acknowledged and acclaimed. Like civil society organisations in general, Memorial should be recognized by Russian authorities as a vital partner in the development of a genuine democratic society built on active engagement by citizens and full respect for human rights. Like others, Norway is concerned by the use of the Law on extremism against this association.

We encourage Russian authorities to ensure the speedy and complete return of all seized equipment and archival material to Memorial, and that non-governmental organisations in general will be able to function and flourish as called for in OSCE commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman