



PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NORWAY,
AMBASSADOR GUTTORM VIK, IN RESPONSE TO
AMBASSADOR IVAR VIKKI, HEAD OF THE OSCE CENTRE IN ASTANA

As delivered to the Permanent Council, Vienna
7 February 2008

Mr. Chairman,

The Norwegian Delegation warmly welcomes Ambassador Ivar Vikki on the occasion of what will most likely be his last report to the Permanent Council in his current position as Head of the OSCE Centre in Astana. We thank him for the important work done by the Centre under his leadership over the last four years, as well as for his comprehensive and well-balanced analysis today of the more general developments in Kazakhstan. We welcome the excellent relationship established between the Centre and the government of the host country, based on mutual trust, and I would also like to highlight the exemplary and very fruitful cooperation with other key OSCE institutions, notably ODIHR, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

Mr Chairman,

We commend Ivar Vikki's forward-looking approach as to how the OSCE Centre best can assist Kazakhstan in preparing for the OSCE Chairmanship in 2010. The preparations for the Kazakh presidency should provide a strong catalyst and a further impetus for Kazakhstan to adopt and implement a broad reform package, in particular with regard to issues that come under the human dimension, as amendments to the media and election laws, liberalisation of registration procedures for political parties, freedom of assembly and strengthening of the rule of law. Progress in these areas will further strengthen Kazakhstan's regional and international role.

We therefore welcome the intention expressed by Kazakhstan in Madrid to vigorously implement its programme for democratic reforms and its OSCE commitments in all three dimensions, and look forward to reports on speedy progress in this regard. Norway is ready to assist Kazakhstan with its preparations to take over the OSCE Chairmanship in 2010 and we propose to invite Kazakh diplomats to Oslo in 2008 for a training programme based on our own experience from the Norwegian Chairmanship in 1999.

We again thank Ivar Vikki for his very valuable contributions in his present position, and wish him all the best for the future.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.