

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE
HEAD OF THE OSCE MISSION TO SERBIA

Delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 12 May 2022

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair,

As others, we welcome Ambassador Jan Braathu back to the Permanent Council and thank him for his report. It provides an informative overview of the Mission's activities and achievements in the reporting period.

Norway supports Serbia and the other Western Balkan countries in their Euro-Atlantic ambitions. Full integration into Euro-Atlantic structures will however not be possible for neither Serbia nor Kosovo without a comprehensive agreement on full normalisation of relations between the two. There is no alternative to the EU-led process, dialogue, and compromise. Norway will continue to contribute to the normalization process between Serbia and Kosovo.

Freedom of the media is an essential element of democracy and remains a priority to Norway, and we are proud to support the Mission's work in this regard. The Mission continues to play a decisive role in facilitating the full implementation of the media strategy in Serbia. This work must continue, and the necessary regulatory framework be implemented to ensure safe working conditions for the media.

It is particularly encouraging to note the Mission's achievements in supporting the Working Group on Safety of Journalist, as media actors continue to be exposed to pressure from various interest groups in Serbia. Norway stands ready to continue its support to the Mission's work in further improving the framework for the media sector.

We also welcome the Mission's valuable support to the Association of Public Prosecutors in facilitating venues for informed and constructive debates on

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constitutional amendments. The amendments, adopted by the Serbian Parliament following the referendum in January 2022, were a significant step in further strengthening the independence of the judiciary.

We appreciate the Mission's broad specter of activities to promote gender equality. If I may ask the ambassador, I would be interested to know more about how the Mission approaches the issue of gender *mainstreaming* throughout its work.

Mr. Chair,

We appreciate the close cooperation the Norwegian Embassy in Belgrade has with the Mission. Norway considers the Field Operations as one of the key assets of the OSCE, as they provide tailored and dedicated support to the participating States. The Mission to Serbia remains a key international institution for building democracy and promoting human rights. I wish you, Jan, and your colleagues in the Mission every success in your work.

Thank you.