



**PERMANENT DELEGATION  
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

STATEMENT BY NORWAY IN RESPONSE TO THE HEAD OF THE OSCE CENTRE IN  
ASHGABAT

As delivered by Counsellor Hilde Austad  
to the Permanent Council  
Vienna, 28 May 2015

Mr Chairman,

I am speaking on behalf of Canada, Switzerland and Norway.

We join others in welcoming ambassador Ivo Petrov to the Permanent Council.

Mr Chairman,

We note the positive developments in Turkmenistan in several fields, as reported by ambassador Petrov. In particular, we welcome plans to establish an independent human rights ombudsman, the laws on freedom of the press and on freedom of association and assembly, and the adoption of a National Action Plan on Gender Equality. We encourage Turkmenistan to implement these measures swiftly. We are also looking forward to the results of the constitutional reform process that was launched last year.

The active participation of Turkmenistan in the work of the Human Dimension Committee and the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting would support the country's reform efforts.

Mr Chairman,

We remain concerned by serious shortcomings in the administration of justice, democratic processes and respect for human rights. An inclusive society, well informed, with room for dissenting opinions, political parties and media, as well as an independent judiciary, where civil society and human right defenders are able to operate without fear of reprisals are important for the long-term stability of any country.

Reports that the government is forcing citizens to dismantle private satellite dishes are disturbing. This interferes with the right to receive and impart information and ideas. Cutting people off from independent sources of information restricts the freedom and

plurality of the media and the freedom to form opinions, and thereby hinders democratic development. We urge the government to stop this campaign.

Mr Chairman,

Several participating States have voiced concern about the many prisoners who have “disappeared” in Turkmenistan’s prison system. Their families are left without any news of the fate of their loved ones, and do not even know if they are still alive. We urge the government of Turkmenistan to ease the pain of the families by providing information on these prisoners.

This would also be a positive step under Turkmenistan’s prison reform efforts and towards full implementation of Turkmenistan’s international obligation to respect the rights of incarcerated persons.

Mr Chairman,

Turkmenistan’s assistance to Afghanistan, both in the humanitarian field and with regard to energy and infrastructure, is highly valued.

We welcome that the relationship between the Centre and the Government of the host country continues to develop and progress, to the mutual benefit of the OSCE and Turkmenistan.

We commend the Centre’s support of prison reform, anti-trafficking, elections assistance, gender equality, combating domestic violence, and strengthening freedom of religion and belief. The Centre’s activities addressing transnational threats, including projects on border security and management, customs and counter-narcotics, document security and small arms and light weapons issues, are also very important.

We also support the Centre’s further engagement with the government and authorities of Turkmenistan in advancing human rights, good governance, security and cooperation in line with OSCE commitments.

Thank you, Mr Chairman