



STATEMENT ON
Security and the Environment

Delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen at the Joint Forum for Security
Cooperation – Permanent Council
Vienna, 21 February 2024

Chairs,

We thank you for bringing the security and environment nexus to the agenda. It is a topic we deem both timely and relevant for a joint FSC-PC meeting. The changing climate manifests itself as unfamiliar and unpredictable environmental events.

However, allow me to first express our mourning for the loss of Alexei Navalny and extend our sympathies to his family. Navalny, a political prisoner, endured persecution for his activism and ultimately succumbed to mistreatment within the Russian penal system, for which Russian authorities bear full responsibility. Navalny's legacy as a fearless advocate against corruption and abuse of power highlights the severe injustices he and many others have suffered under Vladimir Putin's regime. This tragedy underscores the escalating problem of political prisoners in Russia, who face increasingly systematic and widespread oppression.

We reiterate our call for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, reaffirming our commitment to supporting democracy, human rights, and civil society in Russia, and call for a transparent and just investigation into the circumstances surrounding his death.

Chairs,

Thus, taking effective action to mitigate their effects is vital to the security in our region. We warmly welcome the panelists, as well as the two ministers and the Secretary general, and thank them for their insightful reflections.

Environmental issues are undeniably and inextricably linked to issues of security and stability in the OSCE region. The natural environment is under increased pressure from urban development, industrial activity, and globalization. With climate change, we see a rise in cases of extreme heatwaves, unpredictable floods, desertification of fertile soil and rising sea levels. This will challenge existing conflict prevention measures in the face of resource depletion and scarcity.

Dear colleagues,

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The relevance of today's topic is clearly illustrated through Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine. There shall be no doubt that the Ukrainian people bear the brunt of Russia's invasion. However, the Russian Federation's obstruction of Ukrainian grain exports has severely impacted global food security. The laying of mines on land and at sea has hampered the cultivation of the natural environment and endangered fragile ecosystems. As part of the Nansen Programme, Norway supports the Nordic Green Bank's Green Recovery Program in Ukraine to ensure that the recovery of Ukraine, post-conflict, is green.

Competent Ukrainian control over the nuclear power plants in Zaporizhzhia and Chernobyl is the best way to ensure the protection of us all from radiation-caused natural degradation. The account presented last week by the brave Ukrainian victims of the Russian seizure of the Chernobyl NPP facility illustrated clearly the Russian Federation's disregard for nuclear safety in our region.

Chairs,

The environmental damages of military activities begin long before the onset of conflict. The participating States currently experiencing peacetime must take the necessary steps to ensure that our armed forces contribute to the green transition. From choice of army vehicles and navy vessels – to climate-sensitive decision-making during training exercises – to making different operational choices. Innovation and new technology will also have a central role in such a transition. The Norwegian Armed Forces have, in this regard, developed a climate and environmental strategy, which pledges to cut emissions from military activity with 20% by 2030.

The Norwegian Armed Forces have also entrenched environmental disaster response in our 'total defense' strategy. For example, during the extreme weather event "Hans" in Eastern Norway last summer, the Norwegian Defence assisted civilian rescue authorities with personnel, helicopters and expert assistance to aid in the protection of civilians from the destructive flooding and landslides afflicting the region.

Madame chair,

Norway warmly welcomes Cyprus' decision to include the gender perspective in the security and environment nexus. We followed the issue closely as a member of the UN Security Council (from 2021 to 2022) and have included climate as a central part of our last National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2023).

The apparent financial, social and political power disparity between men and women severely reduces the resilience of women in the face of environmental crises.

It is crucial that our adaptation to a warming climate and management of natural disasters do not proliferate or exacerbate such existing social inequalities. Neither can these responses be used as a cover to undermine the democratic control of the armed forces. Women are willing, able and entitled to a full, equal and meaningful participation in all parts of society, including the military.

Chairs,

In closing, Norway would like to reiterate its commitment to cooperating within the OSCE on security issues related to environmental challenges and the changing climate.

Thank you.