



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE ADDRESS BY  
THE PRESIDENT OF THE OSCE PARLAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

As delivered by Minister Councillor Knut Are Okstad the Permanent Council,  
Vienna, 8 February 2024

Thank you,

Madame Chair,

Let me also join others in welcoming President Kauma back to the Permanent Council and thank her for her presentation.

Norway highly appreciates the work of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the important role it plays in bringing together parliamentarians from the participating States, thus enhancing the political and popular legitimacy of the OSCE as a whole.

The OSCE is now in a moment of crisis.

Russia's unprovoked, illegal, and brutal war of aggression against a sovereign, independent and democratic neighbor state has fundamentally destroyed the peace on our continent.

Your recent travel to Kyiv as head of an OSCE PA delegation is a good way to express our support to Ukraine and meet with key players.

Madam Chair,

The OSCE has over many years contributed to stability, confidence-building, and peace in our part of the world.

Norway still believes that the OSCE has an important role to play in the larger security architecture of the 21st century Europe. There are still many unresolved conflicts in the OSCE region, not least to Russia's war in Ukraine. We commend President Kauma's efforts to highlight the OSCE's comprehensive work in promoting stability and human rights in the entire OSCE region.

Norway also fully aligns with the principled stance on the Helsinki Decalogue. These values are indeed sacrosanct and non-negotiable.

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We are however unfortunately experiencing attempts to paralyze the executive structures of OSCE by misuse of the consensus system, including the failure to adopt a renewed budget for the organization.

We greatly value the work of the parliamentarians in advocating for a well-functioning OSCE and in keeping the organization relevant in all the participating states.

Madame Chair,

The year of 2024 has been declared by media as the biggest election year in history involving more than half of humanity. Many of the elections are going to take place in the OSCE region, both east and west, and in bigger and smaller participating states.

There is more to democracy than just the act of casting a ballot. A true democracy embodies the respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights, the protection of minorities, the balance of power, an independent media, and – of course – the conduct of transparent, free and fair elections and election campaigns.

In this context, I am grateful for the close cooperation between the OSCE PA and ODIHR regarding election observations, and we stand united in calling on all participating States to honor their commitments and allow the experts and parliamentarians comprehensive access to facilitate their important work.

The fact that both Belarus and Russia are denying the OSCE full access for their upcoming elections is sad, but – I'm afraid – symptomatic of the current state of human rights and democracy in both countries.

Madame Chair,

The security and stability of the OSCE region is not solely a responsibility and area of interest of governments – it also belongs to the elected representatives of the legislative branch of power. In that regard, we are confident that the assembly will continue to function both as a creative force and as a watchdog monitoring and debating how all the participating states live up to the agreed commitments regarding security, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

We wish Ms. Kauma and all OSCE parliamentarians the best of luck with the upcoming Winter Meeting. We look forward to reading your recommendations, and trust that you will return to your respective national parliaments with a renewed dedication to the comprehensive concept of security this organization is founded upon.

Thank you.