



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE  
PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS**  
Delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council  
Vienna, 10 December 2020

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair,

I join others in welcoming the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr. Peter Maurer, to the Permanent Council and in thanking him for his address to the Council.

The ICRC is an impartial, neutral and independent organisation with an exclusively humanitarian mission. Recognised and mandated by i.a. the Geneva Conventions, the ICRC can, and does, play a unique role as the most significant guardian of humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law. The work of the ICRC is comprehensive and multifaceted and enjoys full support from Norway. In my statement I will focus on only a few issues.

The unresolved conflicts in the OSCE region have continued to claim lives in 2020. This year, it is the conflict in and around Nagorno-Karabakh that has been the deadliest. All participating states have committed to respect international humanitarian and human rights law. In situations of armed conflict, this includes an obligation to protect the civilian population. The ICRC's competence, presence and proximity in the field makes it a key partner to ensure respect for these obligations.

Last week, the OSCE's Ministerial Council adopted a decision on the prevention and eradication of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. We regret that it was impossible to reach consensus on language explicitly underlining the need to provide unimpeded and confidential access to places of deprivation of liberty and to detainees

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by international independent monitors. The ICRC is mandated to do so. We believe a reminder of this to us all, and especially conflicting parties, would have been the right thing to do.

Reports and studies continue to confirm that the level of gender-based violence is alarmingly high across our region, in particular in armed conflict. This is unacceptable and we commend the ICRC for their work to prevent and respond to such violence. We would appreciate to hear more on how we, as participating states, can take concrete action to counter sexual and gender based violence.

Thank you