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**STATEMENT ON THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S DECISION TO DENY OSCE
ELECTION OBSERVERS THE OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE THEIR
UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS**

As delivered by Minister Councillor Knut-Are Sprauten Okstad at the
Permanent Council, Vienna, 1 February 2024

Madame Chair,

On behalf of Norway, we express our deep regret regarding the Russian Federation's decision not to invite OSCE observers to the upcoming presidential election.

This decision contradicts the OSCE commitments made by the Russian Federation and denies both its citizens and institutions the benefit of an impartial and independent assessment of the election.

Norway firmly believes in the importance of democratic elections, and we recognize the invaluable role played by ODIHR in providing credible and reliable election assessments. The refusal to cooperate with OSCE international observers raises concerns about the democratic space and fundamental rights in the Russian Federation.

In a truly democratic system, international scrutiny and transparency are encouraged. We are disappointed that conditions have deteriorated to the point where observers cannot be deployed for the presidential election in March, but we will closely monitor the situation. Norway supports the principles of democracy and election transparency upheld by the OSCE.

I thank you.

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