



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE SECURITY DIALOGUE ON THE
OSCE CODE OF CONDUCT**

As delivered by Ambassador Ellen Svendsen at the 1137th Forum for Security
Cooperation,
Vienna, 20th May 2026

Thank you, Chair.

Norway thanks Georgia for organizing this timely Security Dialogue.

The OSCE Code of Conduct remains one of the most important normative instruments in the politico-military dimension. Russia's war against Ukraine reminds us why. Armed forces without democratic control, legal restraint and accountability are not security. It is coercion.

Only this week, Ukraine has again been subjected to large-scale missile and drone attacks against cities, civilian infrastructure, residential buildings, schools and public facilities. Children were among the injured. The pattern is not accidental. It is part of a war conducted with systematic disregard for the principles that this organization was built to uphold.

For Norway, this is not only a question of condemning aggression. It is a question of whether military power remains bound by law and conscience. Whether civilians are protected as human beings, not treated as instruments of war. Whether commanders understand that orders carry responsibility. And whether those who justify, defend or excuse unlawful war understand that the international community will not allow propaganda, denial or political loyalty to shield anyone from accountability.

Norway's starting point is clear. Security cannot be separated from law. Defence capability is necessary. Deterrence is necessary. But military strength must remain anchored in democratic authority, lawful command and accountability.

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This is also the core of Norwegian policy. We are strengthening our Armed Forces. We are increasing readiness. We are investing in national and allied defence. But we do so within a rules-based order, not outside it.

For Norway, compliance with the Code begins at the political level.

Government and Parliament define the framework. The Armed Forces operate under constitutional authority, civilian control and national law. The message from political leadership must be clear. International law applies also when it is inconvenient. Especially then.

Second, implementation must reach the operational level.

In the Norwegian Armed Forces, the relevant parts of the Code are not usually taught as “the Code” in isolation. They are taught through the legal and operational instruments on which the Code rests. International humanitarian law. Human rights obligations. Rules of engagement. Command responsibility. The law of armed conflict manual.

The point is practical. Soldiers and commanders must know the law before they need it. Legal advice must be available in planning. Training must be realistic. And commanders must understand that compliance is not a legal annex to operations. It is part of operational discipline.

Third, accountability must be credible.

Oversight is important. Ombudsman institutions are important. Parliamentary scrutiny is important. But in this context, the most operational point is investigation and prosecution.

Allegations of serious violations must be examined. Evidence must be secured. Military and civilian authorities must have the competence and mandate to act. If criminal thresholds are met, cases must be pursued through proper legal channels.

This is how the Code becomes more than a political declaration.

Not by repeating commitments. But by building systems that make compliance normal, breaches visible and impunity difficult.

Chair,

The Code is not directed against any one State. It is directed against a dangerous idea. That armed force can operate above democratic control and beyond the law. That idea must have no place in the OSCE area.

Thank you.