

## Oslo Statement on Strengthening the Council of Europe

*(Oslo 16 April 2023)* The 28 March 2023 Oslo Meeting on the Council of Europe gathered parliamentarians, academics, and civil society representatives to discuss challenges facing the organization ahead of its Summit in Reykjavik on 16-17 May 2023. In his speech to the participants, State Secretary Eivind Vad Petersson welcomed engagement for a stronger Council of Europe.

With Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine and backsliding on human rights, democracy and rule of law across Europe, a strong Council of Europe is more needed than ever. The member states should recommit to the organisation's core values. At the same time, the Summit must address new challenges, such as climate change and artificial intelligence through a human rights-based approach. The implementation of the Summit statement should be reviewed after a few years.

The member states should make pledges to take effective steps to ensure full respect for human rights, democratic principles, and the rule of law. The Summit represents a unique opportunity to strengthen the organization as well as for member states to recommit to the fundamental values and principles of the Council of Europe, as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights.

*Participants at the Oslo Meeting* recognized a range of measures that can improve the organization's ability to fulfil its mandate. However, the Meeting decided to focus on a few measures they believe are particularly important.

**First**, the Summit must decide on measures to improve the implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights and the execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. Due regard should also be paid to the proposals from the High-Level Reflection Group. Measures for achieving this goal include:

1. Providing more resources to the European Court of Human Rights and the Council of Europe Department for Execution of Judgments to tackle the case backlog and problems in judgement implementation.
2. The Council of Ministers should have more frequent meetings to address implementation issues and to monitor that the Court's interim measures are adhered to.
3. Arranging high-level visits to the member states, led by the President of the Committee of Ministers, and accompanied by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly, the Secretary-General, and the Commissioner for Human Rights, to draw the attention of national authorities at the highest level to the need to implement the Court's judgments.
4. Strengthening and supporting the role of independent domestic actors such as National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), non-governmental organizations, and relevant professional organizations to advance implementation.

5. Making easy-to-read presentations of all Court judgments and Council of Europe monitoring body recommendations per country for periodic review and decision-making by the Committee of Ministers. Invite civil society organizations, NHRIs, Parliamentarians, and professional organizations to take part in such a review.
6. Member states putting in place effective mechanisms at the national level for executing judgments, with clear assignment of responsibilities of Ministries and other relevant institutions and reporting on these mechanisms during the periodic review.

**Second**, the Summit must strengthen the democratic pillar of the Council of Europe's protection system. Measures for achieving this goal include:

1. Developing standards of democratic governance and rule of law, building on the Venice Commission's rule of law checklist, in the form of Recommendations on principles for good democratic governance adopted by the Committee of Ministers.
2. Deciding to develop an early warning mechanism to detect democratic backsliding, with input from relevant Council of Europe treaty and political bodies, including the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, and presenting country reports on the state of democracy.
3. Strengthening the Council of Europe's cooperation with civil society actors, NHRIs, the academic community, and professional organizations in monitoring the state of democracy, providing education in democratic principles, practices, and inclusive decision-making, and providing advocacy tools to convince governments, parliaments, and the wider population of the benefits of democratic rule.
4. The organization must strengthen its outreach and communication.

**Third**, include civil society organisations, the Conference of International NGOs (CINGO), NHRIs, the academic community, and professional organizations in the work of the Council of Europe. The Summit should underline that key domestic human rights actors can enrich the organisation's processes, as well as increase its visibility and impact in the Member States. Measures for achieving this goal include:

1. Ensuring participation at the Council of Europe for NGOs, NHRIs, and professional organizations. Their views should be taken into account in decision-making, formalising mechanisms of providing input in line with the practice of the Advisory Council of Youth. There should be channels for national non-governmental organisations to engage with the Council of Europe both in Strasbourg and through field offices. Civil society from European non-member states should be included.
2. Member States engaging with relevant civil society organizations and networks on Council of Europe matters.
3. Developing protection and support for human rights defenders and responding swiftly to legislation and policies that delegitimize human rights work.

**Fourth**, the Summit should underline that the Council of Europe shall play a leading role in addressing the devastating impacts on human rights of Russia's war against Ukraine by:

1. Supporting accountability efforts and access to justice for citizens, including by setting up mechanisms to provide damages from the war and establishing an accountability mechanism for the crime of aggression.
2. Providing capacity building for Ukrainian domestic actors – such as public authorities, the NHRI and non-governmental organizations – to monitor, report and address human rights violations on the ground in line with international standards.

## Endorsements

1. Amnesty International Norway
2. Council on Ecumenical and International Relations, Church of Norway
3. FRI – The Norwegian Organization for Sexual and Gender Diversity
4. ICJ Norway
5. Norwegian Centre Against Racism
6. Norwegian Human Rights Fund
7. Pen Norway
8. SAIH – Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund
9. Scholars at Risk Norway
10. The European Wergeland Centre
11. The Norwegian Bar Association
12. The Norwegian Helsinki Committee
13. The Norwegian Humanist Association
14. The Rafto Foundation for Human Rights

Members of Norway's Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)

1. [Schou, Ingjerd](#) (Conservative Party), Head of Delegation
2. [Christoffersen, Lise](#) (Labour Party), Deputy Head of Delegation
3. [Eriksen, Even](#) (Labour Party), Member
4. [Klungland, Lisa Marie Ness](#) (Centre Party), Member
5. [Wold, Morten](#) (Progress Party), Member
6. [Helleland, Linda Hofstad](#) (Conservative Party), substitute member
7. [Lien, Geir Inge](#) (Centre Party), substitute member
8. [Selnes, Lise](#) (Labour Party), substitute member
9. [Thorsvik, Ingvild Wetrhus](#) (Liberal Party), substitute member
10. [Unneland, Andreas Sjalg](#) (Socialist Left Party), substitute member