

State Secretary Astri Aas-Hansen

Mr/Madam Chair,
Members of the Committee,
Ladies and gentlemen,

In this opening statement I will focus, as requested, on the developments that have occurred since Norway's report was delivered in autumn 2009.

Only a few days after submitting its written reply to the Committee's list of issues, Norway suffered its worst attacks since World War II. On 22 July, 77 people were killed, and many more wounded, in the attacks on the government buildings and in the shootings on Utøya. The attacks seem to have been committed by one man singlehanded. They were apparently fuelled by hatred of a multicultural society and were directed at the political forces that are allowing increased immigration to Norway.

22 July represented an attack on Norway as a democratic society, and an attack on our values. These values are based on fundamental human rights such as equality and non-discrimination, and are the basis of our efforts to understand what made 22 July possible, and for examining what lessons we can learn for the future. The Government has established a commission to clarify all aspects of the attacks, and carry out a broad and independent evaluation. It will report to the Prime Minister in August 2012.

On a more general level, our response to the attacks this summer is to intensify our resolve for more democracy, more transparency and more inclusiveness. In this respect, I would like to underline our commitment to continue working for inclusion and against discrimination, intolerance and hate crime.

The goal of the Government's integration and inclusion policy is that every person who has settled in Norway has equal opportunities and is able to participate in society on an equal footing.

The Government has intensified its efforts to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in its Action Plan to Promote Equality and Prevent Ethnic Discrimination for 2009 to 2012. We are also working on a revision of the anti-discrimination legislation and a proposal for a new act to regulate discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. Furthermore, we have started a process for following up the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

A recent study in Sami areas of Norway indicates that almost four out of ten Sami have experienced discrimination "sometimes" or "often". Sami respondents are twice as likely to report that they have been subject to harassment than the control group. The Government takes findings like these seriously, since they indicate that we need to continue our policies for combating prejudice against the Sami and their culture. The establishment of the Sami Parliament in 1989 and the recently developed procedures for democratic participation by the Sami are important measures in this regard.

When it comes to hate crime, the Director General of the Norwegian Prosecuting Authority has emphasized, in his annual circulars, that priority must be given to the work against violence based on religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation or skin colour.

In addition to these measures, the Government launched an action plan to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism in December 2010. The plan is called "Collective Security – Shared Responsibility" and contains 30 measures involving a broad range of actors. The plan addresses right-wing and left-wing

extremism and extreme Islamism, and the focus is on combating people's willingness to use violence to further their political or religious goals.

Mr/Madame Chair,

I would like to comment on two other important issues in the Government's work, namely our efforts against violence in close relationships and our proposals regarding juveniles in conflict with the law.

The Ministry of Justice has started the preparations for a white paper on violence in close relationships, and a new action plan to follow up and replace the existing plan, called "Turning Point". One of the issues we will address is the need for better measures to prevent domestic violence and to help and protect the victims.

We also need more knowledge. The Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies is to conduct a national survey on the extent of domestic violence and sexual abuse, starting in 2011. The results will be presented in 2013.

In addition to these national measures, Norway has signed the new Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, which is the first legally binding European instrument in this field.

The issue of juveniles in prison is on the agenda of several international supervisory bodies, including this Committee. The Government gives it high priority, with strong support from Norwegian civil society.

The Government has recently proposed several legislative amendments relating to juveniles in conflict with the law. There are two major proposals: to introduce

a new criminal sanction called a "juvenile sentence" and to establish separate juvenile prison units.

The Government's primary goal is that minors should not be incarcerated, and the proposed juvenile sentence is intended to reduce the number of minors in prison. It is a new criminal sanction for adolescents aged 15 to 18 who have committed serious or repeated crimes. The sanction will be imposed by the courts and requires the consent and active participation of the minor.

The juvenile sentence is intended to replace *physical* control by a prison with strict *social* control by the relevant services. The sanction includes a conferencing meeting and an individually tailored follow-up plan. The sentence will last from at least six months to two or even three years. A youth coordination team will be appointed to follow-up the juvenile's participation in the plan. The offender's private network, together with schools, the child welfare authorities and health care services, will also be involved in the follow-up. The victim may take part in the process if he or she wishes to do so. The aim is to give the offender a better understanding of the consequences of his or her acts.

In spite of the Government's overall goal that minors should not be incarcerated, prison is sometimes necessary. In order to segregate juveniles from adult prisoners, two separate prison units for young offenders, called juvenile units, are now being established. Most young people placed in prison have complex and comprehensive need for help – from the education sector, the child welfare services, the mental and somatic health services, and the substance abuse care services.

Serving a sentence in these juvenile units involves physical control and restrictions, but the units have a high staff ratio and provide comprehensive, individually tailored programmes.

I would now like to introduce Legal Adviser Kristin Ryan, who will give you an overview of Norway's answers to the Committee's list of issues.

Thank you for your attention.