



## United States Mission to the OSCE

# **Response to the Presentation of the 2022 Programme Outline by the Secretary General, Helga Maria Schmid**

As delivered by Chargé d’Affaires Courtney Austrian  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
May 6, 2021

Thank you, Madam Chair, and good morning everybody.

The United States welcomes the release of the 2022 Program Outline and the 2020 Program Budget Performance Report. We thank the Secretary General, fund managers, and staff throughout the OSCE that have contributed to preparing these documents.

The Program Budget Performance Report recounts the OSCE’s measures to meet the challenges of the past year. It reveals an Organization more nimble and more resilient than many of us may have imagined in the face of multiple uncertainties arising—most of all—from the ongoing pandemic. We applaud the women and men serving in the OSCE during this time of trial and change.

The United States additionally very much welcomes the Secretary General’s focus on the serious and cross-cutting issue of gender. In my own country this issue is discussed at the very highest levels and we are deeply committed to making progress as evidenced by the Biden-Harris Administration’s launch of the White House Gender Policy Council.

Nevertheless, as we begin the review of the 2022 Program Outline, we again find ourselves formulating next year’s budget before we have agreed on a budget for the current year.

In this Council last May, we stressed the need for realism in this process and reiterated our view that zero nominal growth should be a key benchmark in developing the Unified Budget. In other words, any increase in our common financial burden should be fully justified as serving our common security. Our view has not changed. We believe the Chair’s current proposal for the 2021 Unified Budget has met the standard to justify additional resources.

We regret some participating States see the Unified Budget as an instrument to prioritize specific national interests and issues, with little regard for our collective welfare and concerns. We realize the seriousness of some of these individual issues. However, this approach weakens the operational capacity of the OSCE and risks seriously undermining our common security. We accept that any participating State might not join consensus on a particular issue of direct concern. Nonetheless, the longer an impasse on the budget continues, the higher the cost will be to all of us. That cost will fall most heavily on those participating States that stand to benefit the most from the OSCE’s attention and assistance. We should not delay further in approving the budget for the current year and should avoid this situation next year by ensuring passage of the 2022 budget by the end of 2021.

The United States sincerely hopes the Program Outline discussions this year will act as an early warning mechanism to spotlight the areas of disagreement and agreement that will shape the negotiation of next year's budget in the fall. We look to the incoming Chair to identify potential fault lines through its perception paper and propose a way forward, perhaps even to begin to address obvious differences before the presentation of the 2022 Unified Budget Proposal in September.

The United States has contributed a significant portion of this organization's budget from its inception. We do so because we take seriously the *Helsinki Accords* and the commitments we all made 45 years ago. The budget is not the appropriate vehicle for resolving conflicts among ourselves. Our common security is weakened when the organization is inadequately funded to fulfill its mandates.

The top priority of the United States with respect to the Program Outline is to lay the programmatic groundwork for a budget proposal that will secure sufficient resources for the OSCE, with particular focus on the independent Institutions and the Organization's field operations. Our aim will be to spotlight the extent the OSCE serves our common interests and how it can do so even better in the future.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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