

STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 953rd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

Vienna, 16 May 2013

In response to the Secretary General's presentation of the 2014 Programme Outline

The member States of the European Union (EU) thank the Secretary General and all the programme managers for their contribution to the preparation of the OSCE Programme Outline for 2014. We believe, however, that an earlier distribution of the budget documents by the Secretariat would make for a more detailed examination and a more fruitful discussion in the Permanent Council. We hope that this observation will be taken into consideration in the future.

An extensive dialogue between programme heads and participating States is a prerequisite for defining our Organization's strategic budgetary guidelines. Thus, this first phase of the budget cycle is essential if we are to arrive at a common understanding of the challenges and of the choices to be made in order to prepare the Unified Budget Proposal under the best possible conditions. For this reason, the discussion on the Programme Outline would gain from being more interactive and specific.

As we have already mentioned, we consider it urgent to achieve real co-ordination between the previous year's performance assessment and the programme proposal for the following year. We sometimes have the feeling that budget proposals are formulated without drawing the lessons of preceding fiscal years. We support a merger, in 2014, of the meetings on the performance report and on the Programme Outline – a simple measure that will help to modernize the budget cycle and make it more effective.

In the same vein, we believe that the addition of an Executive Summary for each programme, starting last year, has substantially improved this stage and added a multi-year perspective to our discussions, which is useful for the budget cycle in general. It leads us to question the utility of the other document, which needs to have real added value.

We shall examine the Programme Outline with the same concern for providing our Organization with the means to fulfil all its mandates. We think, however, that in 2014 we shall have no other choice than to proceed on the basis of a budget that takes into account the national budgetary constraints with which we are faced. Despite these constraints, we saw last year, as regards some field missions in South-East Europe, for example, that it was possible, through savings on operation, more effective management methods and the setting of relevant priorities, to optimize certain programmes without endangering the full implementation of the mandates. We hope that the other field missions in the region will follow this example.

On the other hand, we are concerned about the continuing difficulties with regard to cross-cutting budgetary issues. This applies, in particular, to the increase in salary costs. A chapter on cross-cutting issues would warrant inclusion in the 2014 Programme Outline.

In essence, we shall examine the 2014 Programme Outline on the basis of our priorities, without prejudice to the outcome of the Kyiv Ministerial Council meeting, which must be taken into account.

To begin with, we shall support a strengthening of OSCE capacities in the human dimension, given the growing challenges that we are observing on this subject in our area. The autonomous institutions are faced each year with unacceptable budget difficulties, among other things, with regard to certain activities that are central to the implementation of their mandate. We shall also ensure that the Organization has the resources to play its full role in conflict resolution and prevention. It must be able to continue implementing the decision on the conflict cycle adopted at the Vilnius Ministerial Council meeting, and to give itself the means with which to implement United Nations Security Council resolution 1325. We encourage a shift of OSCE resources towards other challenges inherent in the Organization's security dimension, for example, the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1540.

As regards the activities to combat transnational threats, the EU member States will support programmatic measures aimed at strengthening internal and external co-ordination. We shall take care to ensure the provision of suitable resources for the effective implementation of Ministerial Council Decision No. 4/12, adopted at the Dublin meeting, while also taking into account the report to be issued by the Secretary General at the end of the year.

Concerning field missions, we are ready for a thoroughgoing dialogue with the fund managers. We are hoping to arrive at a common understanding of the challenges, the resources that should be allotted to them and the reallocations that must be made, notably between geographical areas, for the benefit of the Central Asian missions in particular.

More generally, we consider the field missions and the autonomous institutions as central to the Organization's success. Accordingly, we believe that the Secretariat's share of the budget must stop increasing at the expense of the total budget for the missions and autonomous institutions.

In conclusion, the EU member States wish the new Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Management and Finance, Mr. Alexander Hoffet, every success in the pursuit of these important endeavours.

The acceding country Croatia¹, the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹ and Iceland², the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Moldova, Georgia and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

1 Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

2 Iceland continues to be a member of the European Free Trade Association.