



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON THE 2021 PROGRAMME OUTLINE

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad to the Permanent Council
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Mr. Chair,

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

As part of the Unified Budget process, the Programme Outline discussions are essential for the participating States to give policy guidance to the executive structures of the OSCE. This would then result in a budget proposal translating the ensuing priorities into a proposed course of action.

While this process works well for most structures, over the last few years we have witnessed increasing mismatch between the expectations of the participating States and the budget proposals of some executive structures. For the secretariat's part, the 2020 budget proposal was of this kind.

There were several proposals for organisational changes. Some of these did not, and some would not, enjoy the support of the participating States. They were prematurely proposed. At least one of them was not even mentioned in the narrative part of the budget.

Participating States do not enjoy such managerial sophistry. We do not enjoy being surprised by proposals to fund initiatives that are not ready for implementation. We do not enjoy seeing attempts at revising established structures without a consultative process.

Remember: We, the participating States, *are* the OSCE. Its policy and direction reside with, and only with, us.

One consequence of this is the requirement that the budget and post table, and any revision thereof, is subject to the approval of the participating States. If this provision is to be meaningful, a proper process is required prior to deciding on revisions.

There must be arguments presented when more resources are sought. Likewise for additional or revised positions. For larger issues, including structural revision, a state-led process to determine support should precede the budgetary proposals. The Programme Outline discussions form one part of this, but, in significant matters, they must be supplemented with additional discussions.

Over time, the OSCE has grown into a large, decentralised structure. This can sometimes be a complicating factor, sometimes a frustration, but we do well to remember that it is no weakness. The proximity of each executive structure to the decision-makers is by design. The accountability of the heads of structures, within their mandates, only to the Permanent Council is a strength. The OSCE is not perfect, nor does it have perfect governance processes. Nonetheless, we have to work with the structures and systems that we have. Trying to work around them will only lead to decline and fall.

One example: The Secretariat Management Review continues to lack transparency. States have not been briefed for more than a year. Still, the review is touted in the Secretariat's programme outline as a priority that will lead to "better management processes". But not a word about what a "better process" would be. We expect that the participating States be consulted on what constitutes "better processes" prior to implementation.

As for our overarching programmatic priorities. They remain unchanged since last year. We want a stronger OSCE, and are willing, and able, to contribute to a better funded OSCE to complement our efforts for security in our region. This remains something that we cannot do alone. Joint effort is needed to direct the efforts of the OSCE to where it best can contribute to achieving the most important objectives.

We will return to the priorities of specific executive structures over the course of the coming discussions. Today is the time for overarching priorities.

Gender equality remains top of the agenda for Norway. To that end, it is welcome that all executive structures include gender mainstreaming among their strategic priorities. Gender equality is a means to reaching all the OSCE's mission and greater objectives. Integration of a gender perspective is not a gesture to women, but a matter of effectively and sustainably preventing and resolving conflict.

Our primary objective remains to preserve and strengthen the programmatic and operational capacity of the OSCE. The field operations and institutions are the spearheads of OSCE activity in support of participating States. While parts of the secretariat also engage directly with states, much of its value stems from its support to other executive structures, in particular the field operations.

The preservation of operational capacity requires appropriate, transparent and accountable administrative support. Support to the core activities and operations of the OSCE must remain the essential purpose and function of the Secretariat.

Let me finish with a few words on COVID-19. It is clear that the OSCE must be sensitive to the ongoing responses to the virus. We must adjust our efforts to allow for

maximal operational effectiveness. We have already seen the institutions and field operations react by monitoring state responses They have also contributed to ensuring that the responses uphold the human rights and other OSCE commitments. We think that the OSCE is functioning remarkably well in the current circumstances. However, the OSCE should not be directing resources to counter the virus as such. The OSCE is not a public health organisation, and there is no reason for it to become one.

Thank you