



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Presentation of the 2021 Unified Budget Proposal

As delivered by Ambassador James S. Gilmore III
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 1, 2020

The United States welcomes the presentation by the Officer-in-Charge in the Absence of the Secretary General, Director of the Conflict Prevention Center, and Deputy Secretary General Yrjola, of the 2021 Unified Budget Proposal. We once again express our appreciation to the Secretariat, the fund managers, and their staffs for the tremendous effort involved in formulating this proposal, particularly under the exceptional working conditions that we are all facing during this current pandemic.

We take note of the comment of our colleague from Switzerland with respect to his comment on the responsibility and the success of the Albanian CiO to make the appropriate appointments so that the process can go forward efficiently as it is. This shows the resiliency of OSCE processes and we are very grateful for it.

As we noted during the Permanent Council discussion of the *Program Outline* for 2021, our hope is for the submission of a realistic budget proposal, followed by the timely approval of the 2021 *Unified Budget*. At that time, we stressed that "realistic" in the context of this Organization means proposals for which there is clear consensus on their importance to our common security and to the effective operation of the Organization. We look forward to engaging in the upcoming detailed discussions of the 2021 Unified Budget Proposal with this standard in mind.

In addition, we should continue to be pragmatic and realistic in addressing the impact of the CoViD-19 pandemic on the Organization's focus and operations. We have seen impressive progress in this regard to date and call on the Organization to continue these efforts.

That said, we reiterate the view of the United States that zero nominal growth for the Unified Budget should remain the benchmark and ultimate goal of the budget process. Any increase in our common financial burden should be fully justified as serving our common interests. And we believe that the substantial support for the ODIHR organization and for the field missions, as has been emphasized by our colleague from Turkey today, is justified.

We apply this principle not just to programmatic activities but also to the proposed increases in staff costs that feature prominently in this year's Unified Budget Proposal. Let me be clear that the U.S. supports fair and reasonable compensation for the men and women serving in this Organization. However, we do not accept that additional contributions from participating States is the only means to absorb these costs without sacrificing operations. The citizens of each of our countries are suffering in these unprecedented and difficult times, and national budgets are strained everywhere. We need hard, unambiguous *evidence* that any additional funds we might expend on the OSCE are essential to maintain our citizens' interests. This is the U.S. position.

Overall, the United States' priorities remain unchanged: to secure sufficient resources for the OSCE's independent Institutions, the *Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights*, the *High Commissioner on National Minorities*, and the *Representative on Freedom of the Media*, and to support the Organization's field operations. The U.S. places high value on all of these activities. We are grateful for their inclusion appropriately in the budget. We continue to seek an Organization that is more efficient, lean, and agile. We also aspire to an OSCE that is results-oriented and builds on its experience to produce demonstrable achievements. The United States is willing to explore reform of the budget process, including a possible multi-year framework as has been supported by previous speakers this morning.

Finally, we too strongly wish to avoid the prolonged budget negotiations that have absorbed too much time and energy and have distracted us from the real work of this Organization. This may require just an extra comment for this moment: It has not been good that the budget process has been delayed into the following year. It is detrimental. We are committed to the Swedish process of the new Chairperson-in-Office to get a budget enacted on time. We will be alert to countries that seek to secure their own individual interest at the expense of the Organization. It is not the place of the Unified Budget to pursue national priorities that are unique to any individual country. The Unified Budget must serve the interest of all 57 and the interest of the Organization and it should not be held hostage by any one country, which is always a possibility in a consensus-based organization. But it impinges upon the credibility of this Organization, so the U.S. will do everything in its power to persuade our colleagues to pursue the Unified Budget in an appropriate way and have it enacted on time.

In our view, approving a budget on time—at zero nominal growth or certainly a strong justification for any change—would serve the operations and the reputation of the Organization better than extended wrangling over proposed increases that often ultimately have only symbolic significance. We cannot allow a quixotic quest for the ideal to prevent us from doing what is necessary. We must act responsibly in support of our common welfare and security and we are grateful for the Deputy Secretary for her effort to achieve exactly that goal.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

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