

United States Mission to the OSCE



Statement on the Presentation of the 2022 Unified Budget Proposal by the Secretary General

As prepared for delivery by Chargé d'Affaires Courtney Austrian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 21, 2021

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Madam Chair and Madam Secretary General, for your presentation of the OSCE's 2022 Unified Budget Proposal.

The United States welcomes the presentation of the first Unified Budget Proposal under your tenure and expresses our deepest appreciation to the Secretariat, the fund managers, and their staffs for the tremendous effort involved in coordinating the proposal.

The United States appreciates the challenging task before you: to present a proposal which fulfills the organization's mandate while maintaining the principles of fiscal responsibility and holding true to the budgetary concerns expressed by participating States. My understanding is that this proposal before us is a Zero Real Growth budget, with an increase from 2021 of 2.9%. While we remain open at the beginning of these budget negotiations to the proposal of a Zero Real Growth budget, it is unclear if the budget increase requests in this proposal represent Zero Real Growth in its truest sense, which should be predominantly tied to inflation and staff costs and applied comprehensively across all institutions. Let me be clear that any increase in our shared financial commitment, even those tied to inflation, should be fully justified as furthering our common security and the effective functioning of the Organization.

We welcome the proposal's focus on highlighting specific efficiencies where they have been identified, as well as explaining the real outcomes of the reduction in travel due to the COVID pandemic. We also want to applaud the Secretariat for continuing to scrutinize opportunities for shared services. In this instance, providing information and communications technology (ICT) support from a location outside of Vienna will most certainly reduce staff costs. We want to encourage the OSCE to continue analyzing the outcomes of this relocation to ensure the proposal has the intended effect over the medium and long term of reducing costs, but also maintaining the same standard of support to its customers.

Allow me to comment briefly on one specific budget request, namely that of the OSCE Center in Ashgabat to renovate its new premises. This same request has been made to participating States as a potential opportunity to utilize prior year's budget surplus through our new Capital Investment Planning process, which to us makes the most sense. We encourage States to consider funding this extraordinary budget request through the prior year's surplus, since this case exemplifies the express purpose of the Capital Investment Plan, and not funding it through the regular Unified budget process.

The United States continues to support a stable and reliable budget for the OSCE, one that is approved on time, to allow for proper planning and the fulfillment of the organization's mandate.

Along those lines, our goal should be to support the fulfilment of OSCE's mandate by supporting a realistic and responsible budget. We must steer clear of the prolonged negotiations which absorbed too much energy and, especially during 2021, distracted us from advancing the core policy work of this organization. I implore my colleagues to avoid the scenario where we debate incremental increases only to land in the same place – a zero nominal growth budget – as was the case this year.

Before I conclude, I want to applaud the Secretary General for examining potential reform in the Secretariat through the functional review she mentioned in her letter recommending approval of the Unified Budget. The United States looks forward to any and all updates on this effort as the process moves forward.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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