



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **On the Secretary General's Presentation of the 2021 Program Outline**

As delivered by Ambassador James S. Gilmore III  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
May 7, 2020

The United States welcomes the 2021 Program Outline and expresses our appreciation to the Secretary General, and the fund managers, and their staff for the thoughtful effort that is expended in creating these documents. We appreciate the work expended in preparation of the 2019 Program Budget Performance Report, which provides an excellent, comprehensive picture of the Organization's execution of the 2019 Unified Budget.

As we launch this first phase of the budget process, we want to echo the Secretary General's observation that this dialogue is critical for the submission of realistic budget proposals by October 1 and timely approval of the 2021 Unified Budget by the Permanent Council.

In this regard, however, we have got to express the importance of "realistic budget proposals," as noted by the Secretary General. "Realistic" in the context of this Organization means proposals upon which there is a clear consensus on their importance to our common security and to the effective operation of the Organization. Proposals that don't meet that standard should not make their way into the Unified Budget. We hope the Program Outline discussion will yield realistic budget proposals and help us to avoid the prolonged budget negotiations that absorb too much time and energy and distract us from the real work of this organization. A comment that we know the Secretary General has made frequently. We should also be pragmatic and realistic in addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Organization's focus and operations both this year and potentially into the future. COVID-19 requires us to think critically and creatively about how the OSCE can adapt its program work to continue addressing our shared concerns across the three dimensions.

At the same time, we reiterate the view of the United States that zero nominal growth for the Unified Budget should remain as the benchmark and ultimate goal of the effort that begins with these Program Outline discussions. Our aim is to ensure that any increase in our common financial burden be fully justified in serving our common interests. We take note of the Secretary General's call once again in the Program Budget Performance Report for a "paradigm shift away from zero nominal growth as the lowest common denominator in budget negotiations"— as the Secretary General has argued — in order to ensure that the Organization remains "fit for purpose." In our view, it is only through maintaining the goal of zero nominal growth that we can realize an organization that fits the common purposes identified by the participating States.

In this process, the priorities of the United States remain consistent: 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. We support continued efforts to make the Organization more efficient, lean, and agile. In other words, Mr. Chairman, the United States focuses on the program, on its implementation, making choices as to where money should be spent and making sure that it is effective within the common plan of the OSCE. First focus on the functions and the programs, then make sure that the money is there, in order to implement. The United States remains willing to explore reform in the budget process, including a possible multi-year framework, to make this exercise more strategic and less administratively onerous.

The United States looks forward to the upcoming discussions. As always, we, the participating States of the OSCE, accept the responsibility for the difficult decisions that will shape the Organization for the coming year and in the years to come. Choices and decisions must be made by the Secretariat and by the participating States as to the proper function and program, and then finances will follow. The United States accepts this challenge, and calls upon others to do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Chair