

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/1093/19
7 October 2019

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1242nd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

3 October 2019

In response to the presentation by the Secretary General of the 2020 Unified Budget Proposal

The Member States of the European Union thank you, Mr. Secretary General, for your presentation of the 2020 Unified Budget Proposal and for the commitment you have shown as head of the OSCE.

At the same time, we wish the Albanian delegation, in particular Ms. Alma Kasa, success for the forthcoming negotiations within the Advisory Committee on Management and Finance. We thank the Slovak delegation, notably Mr. Branislav Pavlovič and Mr. Daniel Horák, for their tireless efforts to achieve progress, particularly on the issue of the Scales of Contributions to the OSCE budget.

We also thank the Secretariat and the Fund Managers for their essential contribution to the development of this proposal. We welcome the efforts to achieve clarity in the document that has been circulated to us.

Mr. Secretary General,

We appreciate the emphasis in your introductory remarks on prioritization and anticipation. The difficult context characterized by national budget constraints means that we must focus our efforts and know how to set priorities. You emphasize the need to adopt multi-year strategic planning. We reiterate that a biennial budget could indeed enable the participating States to better determine their long-term programmatic objectives.

The EU Member States are the main contributors to the OSCE budgets, contributing up to 65 per cent of the budgets of the Secretariat and the institutions and 70 per cent of the budgets of the field missions, and therefore pay close attention to the annual budget negotiations. We will carefully consider this first budget proposal. At this point, we wish to recall and highlight a number of principles and points.

We wish to recall that not every issue relating to European security has to be addressed by our Organization, which can act only on the basis of mandates clearly defined by the participating States and where there is proven added value. In the same vein, a task set for the OSCE by a Ministerial Council decision should not systematically result in a budget increase. More than ever, it is necessary to seek greater efficiencies and savings and focus the available resources on the priorities defined by the participating States.

Among our priorities is the allocation of the necessary financial and human resources for the prevention, management and resolution of crises, notably the conflict affecting the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

We also attach the utmost importance to the autonomous institutions, which must be able to carry out their mandates in full, particularly with regard to election observation by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. We have recently seen the need to allocate additional resources in line with these activities, otherwise we are forced to resort, as a matter of urgency, to the budget surplus that should be returned to the participating States. We are in favour of more ambitious budgets for the autonomous institutions. The EU Member States recognize the possibility for field missions to increase their budget, where necessary.

Mr. Secretary General,

As in previous years, we will consider carefully the proposed new expenditure increases for the Secretariat and also the requests for new posts. We reiterate that the identification of sources of savings in staff costs must remain a priority.

We note the proposal for the second year to establish a Capital Investment Fund, despite the failure to reach consensus on this issue last year. The expenses in this fund relate solely to the Secretariat. Some can be considered as investments, others as current operating costs, which should be included in the Secretariat's budget.

The proposed reduction of the Augmentations Fund by ten posts remains inadequate when we have been requesting for so many years for this fund, which was initially temporary, to be abolished.

We are waiting for a solution to be found to the issue of the reimbursement out of the Unified Budget of the taxes levied by certain participating States on the incomes of local field staff. The responsible decision taken by Uzbekistan to fulfil its obligations in this regard shows that a settlement is possible and depends on the political will of the participating States concerned.

Like you, Mr. Secretary General, we hope that the budget will be adopted without delay, if possible before 20 December, as we are aware that such a delay is a major impediment to the sound administrative and financial management of the Organization.

Finally, we wish to reiterate our commitment to making the necessary improvements to cost-sharing among the participating States. Since the expiry of the Scales of Contributions in December 2017, only provisional or temporary solutions have been adopted. The Slovak Chairmanship must continue its efforts to find a lasting solution, which we welcome and support, so that a consensus on the Scales of Contributions, which remains essential, can be reached before 31 December.

Thank you for your attention.

The candidate countries North Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, Serbia¹ and Albania¹, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

1 North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.