



Permanent Council of 24 May 2012

Response by Switzerland and Norway to the Secretary General regarding the Program Outline

I deliver this statement on behalf of Norway and Switzerland.

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome the release of the 2013 Program Outline and thank the Secretary General for presenting it today.

We appreciate the efforts to produce a compendium of executive summaries on key strategy priorities for 2013 – 2015. We expect this approach to inspire a debate, which helps to identify medium-term priorities for the individual funds. Whilst we welcome this pilot exercise which we find in principle helpful for improving the OSCE program budget process, we encourage fund managers to reflect priorities and trends in the next compendium in a more consistent and concrete manner.

We advocate for a sensible resource management, which also includes giving direction to our organization and to concentrate on its comparative advantages. We share the Secretary General's regret that the resources allocated to the OSCE are declining from year to year despite the continuous growth of tasks and challenges. It is in our hands: either we make a clear choice on waiving activities and shifting funds to priority areas or we must provide our comparatively lean organization with more resources to comply with its developing mandate and to meet current and future challenges. In the best case, we do both.

Mr. Chairperson,

We have stated our priorities on numerous occasions: We support strengthening the activities of the Secretariat, the institutions and the field operations in the areas of democratization, promotion of human rights, police training, arms control and combating transnational threats. As regards the conflict cycle, we are of the opinion that the OSCE budget should allow for greater leeway in order to respond to evolving security needs. We believe, moreover, that the activities of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of the Media must be further promoted.

We support the planned gradual reduction in the large field operations in South-Eastern Europe and recommend shifting the focus on niches where the OSCE has special expertise and on emerging needs in other OSCE regions. We reiterate our support to the strengthening of co-operation with the Central Asian States according to the requests for assistance received.

Our organization derives its effectiveness in large part from the expertise and motivation of its staff. The key to maintain a constantly high performance level is therefore our ability to retain and attract qualified staff across all staff categories: internationally contracted and seconded staff, national professionals and general services. We note and support the intention to advocate for fair and consistent salary scales for locally recruited mission members, in line with the UN. We will assess program outlines and – at a later point in time – budget requests also from this perspective.

Mr. Chairperson,

Norway and Switzerland stand for a strong OSCE; an OSCE that maximizes its comparative advantages to maintain peace by promoting security in all three dimensions across the OSCE area. We have to give it the financial means to continue to do so.