



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S PRESENTATION OF
THE 2018 PROGRAMME OUTLINE**

As delivered by counsellor Hilde Austad
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 8 June 2017

Mr Chair,

The OSCE is being gradually weakened through sustained budget cuts in real terms. This is happening despite a stated consensus among participating States that the organisation's relevance has increased along with increasing tensions in the OSCE area in recent years.

We urge all States to avoid short-sighted pursuit of narrowly defined national interests. Instead, we should return to treating the OSCE as a common endeavour. Otherwise we will very soon end up with an organisation that has been reduced to irrelevance.

Last week's approval of the Unified Budget for 2017 almost half a year late was a clear demonstration of the dysfunctionality of the OSCE's budget process. Our inability to agree on the budget severely hampers the organisation's ability to carry out its tasks. The current budget process is inefficient and irresponsible. Reform is urgently needed. We should implement two-year budget cycles without delay.

There is an urgent need for providing the autonomous institutions with the resources they need to carry out their mandates in an effective way. Zero nominal growth over many years has led to severe budget decreases in real terms, and a reduction in the institutions' ability to help make our region more democratic, stable and peaceful. At the same time, the demand for assistance from participating States has continued to increase. This increasing gap between supply and demand undermines our common security.

Norway welcomes the intention of the Office of the Secretary General to continue mainstreaming a gender perspective in all OSCE policies, programmes, projects and activities and support participating States in their implementation of gender-related commitments. We believe this work should get higher priority, and encourage Executive Structures to take inspiration from ODIHR, where gender mainstreaming is one of four strategic priorities. The work of the whole of the OSCE on gender must be further strengthened, to ensure improved implementation of the OSCE's Gender Action Plan from 2004 and obligations from UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. Upgrading the Senior Gender Advisor to director level would significantly increase the profile of the gender work, and should be included in the budget for 2018.

We are looking forward to next week's Gender Review Conference as an opportunity to take stock and identify implementation gaps, and we will expect all Executive Structures to take guidance from the outcome of the conference in their Unified Budget Proposal for 2018. We look to the Secretary General and the incoming chairmanship to ensure that this happens.

We continue to believe in the strong value of the OSCE's field missions, and in the need to strengthen the OSCE's capabilities across the conflict cycle as well as its capacities to assist participating States with countering transnational threats.

We support and encourage efficiency measures. More serious consideration of which conferences and meetings to organise or attend could provide room for savings. At the same time, our approach will in this autumn's budget negotiations remain the same as in previous years – we want a strong OSCE, and we will caution against quick savings that can have unintended consequences. We need a better equipped and more professional organisation, not the opposite.

Thank you, Mr Chair.