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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on 2008 Unified Budget

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 21, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

First of all, the United States would like to thank the Spanish chairmanship and the Finnish Chair of the ACMF for all of their hard work on the 2008 Unified budget proposal as well as for their work on the scale of assessments. It is indeed unfortunate that we have, for the third time in the last four years, failed to meet our budget deadline.

The United States continues to be concerned by the disproportionate growth of the Secretariat in recent years, and is extremely troubled by the prospect of a further de facto shift in resources from the field missions to Vienna. The mere fact that we approved a budget last year of 168.2 million EUR does not mean that we must be bound by that figure this year. Field Missions in the Balkans are rightly downsizing. At the same time, increased requirements in the Caucasus and Central Asia will require increased resources, albeit on a smaller scale. The fundamental question for this organization is "what to do with the 'extra' funds coming out of the Balkans?" We do not see this as a problem at all. If the end result of our negotiations is an overall budget figure of less than 168.2 million EUR, the taxpayers in all of our countries will be happy to see it.

Those in favor of zero nominal growth for the overall budget appear to argue that the extra resources should go towards adding bureaucracy and activities in the Secretariat. We, on the other hand, are convinced that the Secretariat should also be subject to budgetary discipline to reduce its size, improve efficiencies, and eliminate the burdens of top-heavy executive structures. We have made informal suggestions on places where efficiencies could be achieved. We continue to seek ways to find further efficiencies, and are disappointed that other participating States have been reluctant to join us in a constructive dialog on these points. We are ready to continue the dialog in the coming year, and look forward to reaching a compromise that will respect the necessary work mandated to the Secretariat while eliminating unnecessary layers and duplication.

The United States has a very different view in response to the far more radical cuts to ODIHR proposed by some participating States. We will not allow severe cuts to this office's budget. There may be efficiencies here as well, and we are willing to work with ODIHR and other interested states to find them, but we will not allow the very fabric of the office to be shredded. ODIHR has a clear mandate, and it does an excellent job fulfilling it, despite the obstacles sometimes generated by some participating States. The answer to ODIHR's problems is not to cut its budget radically. The answer to ODIHR's problems is a fuller dedication by all participating States to put into practice the commitments we have all made and to which ODIHR's mandate and work are dedicated.

We look forward to constructive dialog on our budget priorities in the new year, and continue to hope for the earliest possible approval of the 2008 Unified Budget.

Thank you Mr. Chairman