



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report of the Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Courtney Austrian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 1, 2023

Ambassador Yrjölä, the United States welcomes your report and, in light of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, shares your clear-eyed opinion that the Conflict Prevention Centre's work in conflict prevention and resolution, crisis management, post-conflict rehabilitation, and peacebuilding is now more important than ever. We also share your urgent concern about the severe challenges facing the Centre. Participating States must reach consensus on a Unified Budget, and your report details the real costs to core functions of this organization by its absence.

We are pleased to see, despite this major constraint, the substantial progress you and the staff of the CPC have made since your presentation to the Permanent Council in October and please extend our thanks to your staff. The extra-budgetary Support Programme for Ukraine, created in response to Russia's aggression, delivers tangible support to the people of Ukraine and directly helps meet needs on the ground. The CPC's expertise and energy has been essential to the establishment of this program, and we look forward to further innovation in continuing to address challenges to regional security.

We appreciate the CPC's advancement of the OSCE Information Management and Reporting System in support of Political-Military commitments since your last report. These innovations make information exchange and verification requirements of OSCE confidence and security building measures accessible to all participating States and improve essential participation rates. We also welcome the CPC's continuing support to the Forum of Security Cooperation and Structured Dialogue formats, and to the extensive programs of field missions in Central Asia, the Western Balkans, and Moldova.

Mr. Chair, participating States committed "to use, swiftly and to the greatest extent possible, all available tools and procedures as applicable to a particular crisis or conflict situation" at the Vilnius Ministerial Council in Decision No. 3/11. We note initiatives by CPC to strengthen and creatively use the OSCE's toolbox under the Vilnius decision, including through the establishment of an OSCE Strategic Asset Reserve. We value the CPC's readiness to support negotiation and mediation efforts associated with protracted conflicts in the OSCE region and facilitation of the work of the personal and special representatives of the Chair-in-Office, which require sustained financial support. We continue to appreciate the CPC's effective focus on gender mainstreaming to increase the representation of women at all levels in early warning, conflict prevention, conflict management, conflict resolution, and peace processes.

Russia's current obstruction continues its years-long trend of undercutting this organization's functioning and, specifically, much of the work dealt with by the CPC. We regret to see the

effects of those actions become apparent in the report. Once again, the United States calls on Russia to immediately and unconditionally release the detained members of the Special Monitoring Mission and to return to the participating States the SMM vehicles that Russia stole.

Your report has made it abundantly clear that the lack of a Unified Budget is seriously impacting this Conflict Prevention Centre's ability to fulfill its mandate. Colleagues, it is manifestly impossible to do "the same with less." The CPC, field missions, and autonomous institutions need the financial stability and resources guaranteed by a Unified Budget if they are to successfully fulfill their mandates – mandates which were agreed to by consensus. Ambassador Yrjölä, it is clear that lack of adequate funding is costing us qualified staff, threatens your ability to support field operations and tailored requests from participating states, and directly undermines your implementation of mandates under Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/11.

Your description of the degradation of the OSCE Communications Network due to funding shortfalls directly tied to the Unified Budget is in my opinion a canary in a coalmine. The Communications Network, used for the secure communication of arms control and cybersecurity related notifications, is no longer reliable because we can't pay for the necessary upkeep. This Network is meant to decrease tensions and increase transparency – something all participating States are in sore need of right now. If this basic and critical confidence building measure is not safe from the effects of budget posturing, what in this organization is?

Ambassador Yrjölä, thank you for your sobering report. We hope the consequences described in it encourage all participating States to take seriously their obligations for the political and financial backing of this organization. You and all of the staff of the CPC have the full support of the United States.

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