

**EUROPEAN UNION****25<sup>th</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum  
Second Preparatory Meeting  
Astana, 14–16 June 2017**

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**EU Opening Statement**

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The European Union and its Member States are pleased to participate in the Second Preparatory Meeting of the 25th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, and would like to thank the Austrian Chairmanship, the OSCE Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities and his team, as well as our Kazakh hosts for organising this meeting, including the visit of the Expo on "Future Energy" yesterday.

We would also like to thank the keynote speakers for their inspiring presentations and for underlining that the Sustainable Development Goals are about social, economic and environmental development and thus very much about security as reflected in the OSCE comprehensive approach to security. The EU has played a central role throughout the process leading towards the adoption of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We remain committed to both and are convinced that the Paris Agreement will endure, despite the recent announcement of one OSCE participating State to withdraw from the Agreement. The EU deeply regrets this decision. Climate change is a risk-multiplying threat with a broad strategic dimension and it must be our common goal to combat it. Caring about our planet is an investment in our own security. The Paris Agreement provides a lifeline, a last chance to hand over to future generations a world that is more stable and secure, fairer societies and more prosperous economies. Europe will lead through ambitious climate policies and through continued support to the poor and vulnerable.

The topic of our meeting, "Greening the Economy for Sustainable Development, Security and Stability" is a very timely one. Economic expansion has imposed

ever greater demands on natural systems; however, this cannot continue indefinitely. The environment has natural limits in terms of how much it can provide and absorb. Green growth isn't just a preferable approach to economic development. On the contrary, in the long term it is the only way to sustain prosperity and thus stability and security. This is why greening the economy features prominently in a range of medium- and long-term EU programmes and strategies in areas such as managing resources, countering climate change, innovation, sustainable consumption and production, waste and water management.

Also Energy security is strongly interlinked with political and geo-political security and is one of the main pillars of the EU's Energy Union project. We are looking at how to diversify our energy sources and resources, become more self-reliant, and do so in a way which is both environmentally sound and socially fair. Promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy is a priority. Our energy security is based on solidarity and trust which can be achieved only through constructive and mutually beneficial cooperation between supplying, transiting as well as consuming countries. We highly value the OSCE as a platform for dialogue to this end.

We also attach great importance to good environmental governance and the reduction of environmental risks.

Environmental issues are increasingly becoming the source of potential conflicts. We need to make best use of the OSCE as our common tool to prevent such conflicts from breaking out. A lot of valuable work is already being done – by the OSCE secretariat, the field operations and the Aarhus Centres. The OSCE must also team up with other relevant international and regional organisations to efficiently add its specialised expertise to the global efforts.

We look forward to inspiring and productive discussions during these two days here in Astana and would, once again, like to thank all those who participate in the organisation of this event. Let's make our planet green and secure again.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\* and ALBANIA\*, and the EFTA country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

\* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.