



EUROPEAN UNION

First Preparatory Meeting of the 31st OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum 29-30 April 2024, Vienna

EU Closing Statement

1. The European Union and its Member States thank the Chairpersonship of Malta, and the OSCE Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities, as well as their teams, for organising this meeting. We also extend appreciation to the speakers, moderators, and panellists from academia, the public and private sectors, and civil society representatives for their insightful contributions.
2. This meeting has served as a platform for diverse perspectives on enhancing security and stability in the OSCE region through digital innovation, and its contribution to sustainable development and climate adaptation. We have discussed how the OSCE can promote economic cooperation to strengthen security, foster confidence-building, and prevent conflicts in the OSCE region, in line with OSCE principles and other international commitments.
3. We have followed with interest the panel discussion which highlighted efforts to accelerate the energy transition and ensure energy security, including through the increased use of renewables and diversification of energy sources. We continue to attach particular importance to strengthening the resilience of critical energy networks, increasing energy efficiency, and harnessing renewable energy as an effective means of enhancing energy security in OSCE participating States, while contributing to sustainable development and inclusive economic growth.

Additionally, there has been acknowledgement of the importance of promoting access to quality education and training to bridge capacity gaps, and improve digital skills, thus strengthening competitiveness and social fairness of our economies, essential elements for achieving sustainable development.

4. We welcome today's contributions on reinforcing good governance, transparency, anti-corruption measures, as well as promoting resilience and digital transformation. We take good note of the panellists' thoughtful insights, as well as the regional and national initiatives in these areas, and we look forward to continuing these discussions in the Economic and Environmental Committee meetings.
5. We cannot overlook the significant context in which this Preparatory Meeting takes place - a time of profound crisis for the OSCE region and beyond. Russia's unprovoked, unjustifiable and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, which we strongly condemn, has inflicted immeasurable human suffering and multifaceted, devastating consequences on Ukraine's economic, environmental, and energy security. The repercussions of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine have ripple effects which are detrimental to the OSCE region and beyond.
6. The EU looks forward to building upon the outcomes of this meeting through continued constructive engagement in the OSCE's economic and environmental dimension. We are determined to advance the work of the second dimension, building more resilient and inclusive economies and societies, and, ultimately, achieving comprehensive security for the benefit of all. The EU places great value on the Economic and Environmental Dimension as an integral part of OSCE's comprehensive approach to security.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, and GEORGIA as well as ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.