



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

25th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

“Greening the Economy and Building Partnerships for Security in the OSCE Region”

CONCLUDING MEETING

Prague, 6-8 September 2017

Venue: Czernin Palace, Loretánské nám 5, 118 00 Prague

Welcoming Remarks

Ambassador Vuk Žugić

Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities

Minister Zaoralek,
Minister Schelling,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to join our host and Minister Schelling in warmly welcoming you all to the Concluding Meeting of the 25th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum.

This year we mark the 25th **Anniversary** of the Economic and Environmental Forum. This is a significant milestone, which provides the opportunity to reflect on past achievements and on the OSCE’s added value in addressing economic and environmental challenges to security.

The Economic and Environmental Forum process is a vivid example of the role the OSCE can play in addressing pressing issues of great complexity, and contributing to strengthening the political will and building consensus among the 57 participating States. For a quarter of a century, both high level decisions and practical activities have emerged from the Forums deliberations. The Forum has been congregating an eclectic mosaic of opinions, bringing together various stakeholders - policy makers and experts, government officials and civil society representatives - and engaging them in important debates.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year's Forum, devoted to greening the economy and building partnerships, provides a great opportunity to enhance the continuity of our work in the Economic and Environmental Dimension. I believe these topics offer us a great opportunity, not only for interesting discussions on the most pressing issues, but most importantly for meaningful follow-up activities. I am convinced that participating States, by listening to the experiences of each other as well as of OCEEA and the OSCE Field Operations, will find enough food-for-thought to strengthening the OSCE's mandate in these priority areas.

Throughout the **preparatory process**, high level representatives and experts from the OSCE region, public and private sectors, civil society and academia, as well as from regional and international organizations, formulated already valuable and operational recommendations.

The outcomes of the preparatory meetings enabled us to better understand the current challenges, the perspectives of different stakeholders, and the options we have to advance co-operation on these very topical and important issues. The previous discussions also underlined the role of the OSCE as a platform for dialogue to elaborate collaborative approaches and catalyze joint action in these areas.

The **First Preparatory Meeting** of the Economic and Environmental Forum this January was dedicated to good governance, business partnerships and economic participation. The meeting looked at how the fight against corruption can contribute to economic development and underlined the importance of co-operation in trade, transport, customs and energy, noting that security, economy and peace are interdependent. Promotion of sustainable economic and trade relationships between participating States could contribute to rebuilding trust and confidence thereby strengthening stability and security in the OSCE region. It was noted that close co-operation and integration may enhance the quality of governance and stimulate economic development. The participants also discussed about ways of supporting and creating new jobs and strengthening security by enhancing economic participation.

In Astana in June, participants of the **Second Preparatory Meeting** spoke about ways and means of advancing resource efficiency and greening the economy, reducing environmental risks and enhancing environmental good governance as well as strengthening energy security through renewable energy. During the two-day meeting, participants debated how our Organization could further contribute to the transition to a green and sustainable economy in the region and agreed on considerable potential for further OSCE engagement in these areas

including in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. On the occasion of the EEF participants also enjoyed the generous hospitality of the Government of Kazakhstan by having the opportunity to visit the 2017 Expo Exhibition “Future Energy”.

Let me also bring to your attention the review report on the implementation of the OSCE commitments relevant to the environmental aspects of green economy. This report provides a comprehensive overview of the relevant OSCE commitments in this field, demonstrates a number of best practices from the OSCE region, and provides valuable recommendations which I believe will guide our discussions in this meeting. Taking this opportunity, I would like to thank Ambassador Algayerova and her able team once again for all their support in preparing this year’s review report.

Transforming the recommendations from our Forum deliberations into action would require further efforts and political will. Here in Prague we should consolidate these results and pave the way to a successful Ministerial Council in Vienna in December.

I am confident that this year, once again, the deliberations at the Forum will, in the end, lead to a reinforcement of commitments undertaken by our participating States. The outcomes of the post-2015 global development process, particularly the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs will guide us in this endeavor along with the outcomes of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference that was convened by the UNECE last year in Batumi with a focus on “green economy”.

In concluding, let me voice my highest appreciation for the excellent co-operation with the Chairmanship along this year’s Forum process.

Let me also thank our speakers, the Delegations, representatives of the Field Operations and all participants for joining us in Prague. Your knowledge and practical recommendations will help us to reflect on the role of the OSCE in the field of greening the economy and building partnerships – with a view to the forthcoming Ministerial Council meeting in Vienna in December.

I look forward to a productive discussion over the next few days.

Thank you.