



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

25th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

“Greening the economy and building partnerships”

FIRST PREPARATORY MEETING

“Good Governance, Business Partnerships and Economic Participation”

Vienna, 23-24 January 2017

OSCE Congress Centre, Hofburg, Heldenplatz, 1010 Vienna

Welcoming Remarks

Dr. Halil Yurdakul Yiğitgüden

Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants,

It is an honour to address this opening session of the First Preparatory Meeting of the 25th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum.

I am very pleased to welcome so many experts who joined us today to share their in-depth knowledge on different aspects of good governance, business partnerships and economic participation. I am convinced that your expertise and experience will enrich our discussions and facilitate the search for better solutions in the area of good economic governance. Today, we have with us many representatives of governmental bodies from the OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation, representatives of international organisations, international NGOs, academia and representative of the private sector. Let me also welcome our Economic and Environmental Officers, who have come from our field operations.

The topics of the next two days sessions are of high significance for emphasizing security in our common region.

Within the Economic and Environmental Dimension, issues related to good governance and corruption prevention have always been high on the agenda. Good governance is essential for achieving sustainable development, including economic growth, and environmental protection. As Secretary General Zannier just mentioned, corruption remains among the main challenges many participating States are facing. Negative impacts of corrupt practices on economic and social development and political stability are increasingly understood by the wider society. Indeed, corruption undermines democracy, erodes the confidence of citizens in

governmental institutions and impedes social and economic development. Thus, it potentially leads to political instability and civil unrest and being one of the most serious threats to security and stability. Therefore, it is of crucial importance to develop an overall legal, institutional and cultural framework including anti-corruption measures and strategies that will promote good governance and integrity and prevent and discourage corrupt conduct.

Activities, focused on how to enhance good governance, are among the core activities of my Office. Over the past years, we have built up a strong record of projects supporting participating States in strengthening good governance and fighting corruption undertaken in co-operation with our international partners.

In 2016, the OSCE, with the support of UNODC, OECD, the Council of Europe and other partners, published the OSCE Handbook on Combating Corruption. This Handbook will form a useful source of information and guidance for policy makers and practitioners in the OSCE region and beyond who seek to prevent corruption and suppress this destructive phenomenon. Last year, my Office also initiated a number of targeted scoping missions to focus its policy support to requesting participating States more effectively in the area of good governance, including missions to Tajikistan, Mongolia and a number of countries in South East Europe. A number of expert meetings and workshops were held in Vienna and abroad.

For example, my Office hosted in Vienna a regional Expert Meeting on Fostering Co-operation in Combatting Corruption and Money Laundering in September 2016. The event brought together over 30 participants from Austria, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, the Russian Federation, Israel, Romania, Liechtenstein, and experts from Eurojust, Europol, UNODC and Moneyval. The meeting enhanced cooperation among the Financial Intelligence Units and specialized international organizations in the field and developed and gathered best practices in preventing and combating money laundering.

The OCEEA also organised an expert meeting on Lessons learnt from South East Europe that took place in Vienna, in October 2016 to support of effective and transparent management of public resources and the fight against corruption in the Western Balkans. The meeting focused on identifying trends and sharing best practices in combating corruption in the areas of political party financing, public officials' assets and income disclosure, public procurement, and money laundering.

I would like to invite you to read our food-for-thought papers developed by the OCEEA for more detailed information on OSCE engagement in these and other areas. I want to ensure you that we stand ready to continue providing targeted advice and assistance to the participating States and to step up efforts to support the implementation of commitments related to good governance and corruption prevention.

In an increasingly interconnected world, good governance requires a participatory, inclusive, multi-stakeholder and cross-dimensional approach among governments, civil society, business communities and academia. Therefore, building on last year's efforts, we will continue to act as a bridge of dialogue among various stakeholders in all our activities to generate greater awareness of good governance initiatives. I am happy to see many of our stakeholders here today and I look forward to your inputs.

Strong economic partnerships, domestically and internationally, are, undoubtedly, a driver of sound business and investment climate, economic prosperity and sustainable development. The theme of "economic connectivity" has gained particular importance last year during the

German OSCE Chairmanship, thereby underscoring OSCE engagement in the area of transport, trade, customs and economic co-operation.

Significant work in this direction has been done both through the Secretariat and the field operations. My Office, together with partner organizations, such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the World Customs Organization (WCO), have been engaged in numerous activities supporting the adoption and implementation of legal instruments related to transport, trade and border crossing facilitation; providing political support for the development of international transport and logistics networks connecting Europe and Asia, promoting the dissemination of best practices and standards in the transport field and facilitating public-private dialogue.

Recent examples of such activities include a “Regional Trade Facilitation and Border Management Workshop” which was held in June of last year in Dushanbe, co-organized by the OCEEA, the OSCE Office in Tajikistan and the UNECE Trade Division. Discussions focused on simplifying and harmonizing procedures for international trade, including customs clearance, transit, import and export procedures.

In September 2016, in Astana, the OCEEA and the OSCE Programme Office in Astana co-organised with the World Customs Organization (WCO) a “Regional Workshop on Enhancing Trade Facilitation through the improvement of Regional Transit”. This event provided an overview of available mechanisms to improve the transit transport potential of the region, in particular those that are linked with the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

Economic deprivation and high unemployment rates are among the factors that affect stability and security. Therefore, it is very important to remove obstacles to the creation of new jobs and the expansion of businesses to prevent radicalization of certain groups. Special attention should be paid towards women and youth. The role of the business community in addressing these matters is immense. The private sector contributes significantly to the creation of jobs and thus to prosperity, stability and security. Here, I wish to welcome the OSCE Chairmanship Business Conference on 25 January as the next important step to give a stronger voice to the private sector.

Since 2006, the OSCE has pioneered a Best-Practice Guide for a Positive Business and Investment Climate, which is a useful tool for policy-makers, providing best practice examples from countries in the OSCE area that have made significant strides in business climate improvement and economic development.

Promoting women entrepreneurs in Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Azerbaijan is one of the successful initiatives carried out in this area by the Office of the OCEEA, an initiative that my the Office plans to continue and expand.

The OSCE, and my Office in particular, is attaching great importance to labour and social inclusion of migrant adolescents and women economic empowerment. We are ready to support labour market governance and economic participation of all workers promoting best practices and supporting policy reforms.

Dear Colleagues,

I believe that there is a constant need to further enhance co-operation among participating States and other international actors active in the area of good economic governance.

In this respect, I would like to stress once again our willingness to better assist the participating States in addressing the multiple challenges we are facing in the OSCE area. It is our common responsibility to discuss in the coming days where and how this support can be improved.

I believe that the 25th anniversary of the Economic and Environmental Forum will be an excellent opportunity to use the full potential of this dialogue for the future.

Let me conclude by wishing you a very productive meeting and I strongly encourage you to actively participate and contribute to our deliberations, especially during the working groups that will take place tomorrow. I am looking forward to fruitful discussions.

Thank you for your attention.