

26th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

First Preparatory Meeting

Promoting economic progress and security in the OSCE area through innovation, human capital development and good public and corporate governance

Address by Ms. Nilza de Sena

Chair of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment.

“Boosting sustainability through digital economy”

Tuesday, 23 January 2018

Dear Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to the organizers for inviting me today to address such a distinguished forum in my capacity as Chair of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment.

I would also like to commend the very ambitious and forward-looking programme of the Italian Chairmanship of the OSCE in the 2nd security basket and reiterate the full support of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA). We stand by you in meeting the security expectations of our citizens on critical issues such as human capital development, migration, good governance and climate change.

The OSCEPA is a forum of 323 parliamentarians from the 57 OSCE participating States. As such, it represents a valuable bridge between the peoples and the governments in the OSCE region on crucial topics such as those discussed today, bringing together the hopes, fears and concerns of over 1 billion citizens.

This is particularly true when we talk about the digitalization of our economies, a phenomenon that is already a worldwide reality with overarching development and security implications. In this context, the OSCE PA 2017 Minsk declaration stipulates that the impacts deriving from technological evolution and digitalization need to be duly addressed at national and international levels.

As a matter of fact, digitalization and information technologies have become indispensable tools in our everyday life, where using them is not a matter of choice, but a necessity in all aspects of our lives. The increasingly rapid progress in the ICT – sector is transforming our community into a fully digital society.

We are entering an age where soon it will be difficult to differentiate between the physical and the digital. We live in a new era, where the economy is based on technology 4.0 – with such significant advances as energy storage, artificial intelligence, genomics, unmanned vehicles and 3D printing, powered by new collaborative business models – that still coexist with policy 1.0, with some anachronistic mechanisms of representation, participation and

scrutiny. Our economies are in a huge transition period and we need to follow these developments in an effective way.

In the year 2000, when the international development community came together at the United Nations (UN) to approve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the digital revolution was just beginning. At that time, according to World Bank reports there were fewer than 1 billion mobile phones in use worldwide and just 400 million Internet users.

A typical day in the Internet today comprises of 2.3 billion GB of web traffic, 207 billion emails sent, 36 million purchases on Amazon, and 4.2 billion Google searches. Having said this, if we want to achieve more impact with the new SDGs in the next decade and a half we must integrate digitization into our current model of the economy, making full use of the advantages it provides.

In this new era changes in education are needed, as 65% of current students will work in professions still not created. Totally new jobs are coming. The next few decades will undergo the biggest and fastest transformations ever – in technology; science; interpersonal relations and economies!

The goals stipulated in the 2030 Agenda were built on the success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and target, *inter alia*, to achieve cross-dimensional sustainable development. Thus, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seek to achieve sustainability at an individual, institutional and national level in all challenging areas.

For instance, in the 9th SDG on infrastructure, industrialization and innovation, member states commit to “significantly increase access to ICTs and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in LDCs (least developed countries) by 2020.”

It goes without saying that the implementation of these goals lies within the engagement and the will of each member country, both in terms of domestic reforms and international cooperation. Once the determination persists, the remaining question is which tools are most suitable to boost sustainability in the 21st century?

In the digital economy all aspects of business are based on technology. In terms of sustainable development this is the most beneficial, as digital tools can be used to deploy funds and knowledge more efficiently and to include more people in the process. They can

enable a faster and cheaper distribution of information, to a broader audience resulting in better outcomes. Furthermore, online tools provide a more inclusive mechanism to collect feedback and data to optimize future strategies.

Ideally, a digitalized economy should also lead to a greener economy, whereby we strive to reduce the carbon footprint of the way we do business and redirect the saved resources to further our sustainable development efforts. “Smart cities” are a good example of how we can boost development; improve the lives of our citizens and aim to green the economy, which mitigates climate change.

Today 54% of the world’s population lives in urban areas, but the proportion is expected to increase to 66% in 2050, according to United Nation’s estimates. That will impose new models, smart behaviors and hi-tech cities!

Against this backdrop, the OSCE should play a prominent role in supporting this process - which is happening irrespective of our will - and promoting a fair, safe and green digitalization of our economies.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly will also play its part, as we intend to hold a special debate on climate change and the risks stemming for our society at the upcoming Winter Meeting of 22-23 February 2018. I will gladly use my role as Chair of our 2nd Committee to report about the outcomes of this debate and inform our future deliberations on this front.

In fact, it is my precise aim to build more complementarity relationship between the work of the governmental and parliamentary structures of this organization, as I am convinced that only together we can achieve tangible results and safeguard the interests our citizens, which include promoting a digital economy which is user-friendly, inclusive and green.

Thank You!