

**25th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum**  
**Prague, 6-8 September 2017**  
**Welcoming remarks by H.E. Lubomír Zaorálek, Minister, MFA CZ**

Mr Chairman,  
Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished Guests,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all in Prague on the occasion of the 25th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum. I would especially like to welcome deputy of the OSCE Chairmanship, Minister of Finance of the Republic of Austria, Mr. Hans Jörg Schelling.

The main topic of this Forum is **“Greening the Economy and Building Partnership for Security in the OSCE Region”**. It is an important and timely topic and many thanks to the Austrian Chairmanship for choosing it. In a globalized world, any imbalance of our planet can easily come back to us. The link between environment, economy, and security is clear. **We already know that greener economy brings more benefit and creates greater stability.**

Over the 25 years of its existence, the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum has proven that it is well suited for such a multifaceted debate. In my view, it is the right platform to discuss, suggest and encourage the implementation of steps that can efficiently boost our economy, protect our environment and strengthen our partnerships. **Only then we can enhance stability, security and resilience in the OSCE area.**

Yet as we all know, the OSCE efforts are not the only one. A lot of work in the area of economy and environment is being done by a variety of international organizations. In our search for viable solutions, we can therefore draw on a number of world platforms where greener economy is already being discussed. The Green Growth Strategy of the OECD, which offers a practical framework to manage pressing challenges to economic development and resilient ecosystems, is a good example. It is flexible enough to suit different countries at different stages of development. Another example is the UNEP-led Green Economy Initiative, which provides analysis and policy support for investing in green sectors and in greening environmentally unfriendly sectors. **Both platforms are a good source of inspiration and ideas, which we can bring to a full circle in connection with security and, what I would like to stress, good governance.**

**Indeed, many sub-topics of this year’s Forum are in one way or another related to good governance, which is an inherent part of the OSCE’s economic and environmental dimension.** I can hardly imagine long-term prosperity and security without ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to play an active part in the society. A local environmental project may well serve as an accelerator for significant changes in the region, while creating new jobs and securing healthier environment at the same time. Participation of citizens, businesses and state actors is therefore crucial. That is why it is also the Czech Republic’s priority during its ECOSOC Presidency for the 2017-2018 term.

Let me mention one good example from the Czech Republic, namely Silesia, a part of the Czech Republic where I come from. **The *Regional Project Slezsko/Silesia 1991 – 1997*** is a case in point. Based on the recommendations of the World Bank, the project started in 1991 with the objective to identify, analyze, lower and manage environmental health risks in Northern Moravia and Silesia. It involved four countries - the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and the United States, 6 districts in Northern Moravia and several more in Poland. It concerned 3.6 million people and 15 thousand square kilometres of land. In these circumstances, a top-down approach would not have delivered long lasting and sustainable results. **A participatory approach based on close cooperation of the public and private sector, the academia and the civil society was the only reasonable way forward. And it was a successful way.**

After six years, the project achieved all its goals – and even more. It offered solutions that were implemented with excellent results: technological changes were introduced and risks to health were considerably reduced. It set standards and codified methods that were subsequently adopted by the State Environmental Policy of the Czech Republic. **It created a healthy and safe environment, in which new businesses and residential areas can grow (Nová Karolina Project).**

As a participating State as well as the current President of ECOSOC and the Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the Czech Republic remains committed to all three OSCE dimensions. **Let me therefore briefly touch the security dimension.** The current security challenges underline, more than ever, the significance of the OSCE as a forum for broad and inclusive dialogue building upon the OSCE's unique comprehensive security concept. In the long term, the OSCE needs to concentrate on activities with clear and specific value. The Organization should also better connect implementation of existing commitments with political tasks of participating States and also all areas of its activities.

**That brings me to one point I would like to stress in this regard.** The Czech Republic has the privilege to host the OSCE's annual Economic and Environmental Forum already for a quarter of century. We have always been determined to contribute to strategic dialogue about the key challenges in the OSCE area. That is why we successfully co-hosted the OSCE Security Days in Prague in May this year. We are willing and ready to become a regular host of the Security Days in the future. Furthermore, the OSCE Documentation Centre in Prague, which is one of the OSCE's administrative-technical assets, could be better used in the organization of OSCE events focused on outreach activities or it could further expand its academic and research portfolio.

**Finally, I need to mention the ongoing crisis in Ukraine.** It is essential to insist on restoring respect and adherence to the fundamental OSCE commitments and principles. The security development on the ground in recent months has been volatile, which proves the indispensability of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission. **It is therefore important, that the security, safety and unconditional freedom of movement of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission have to be granted by all sides.**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I hope that the 25th Economic and Environmental Forum will see a fruitful and productive dialogue. Again, I would like to thank the Austrian Chairmanship for all its efforts in preparation of this Forum and I wish you all a nice and pleasant stay in Prague.

Thank you for your attention.