



United States Mission to the OSCE

Opening Statement at the Concluding Meeting of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

As delivered by Darren Perdue, Deputy Political Counselor
Prague
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Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, fellow delegates, representatives, and distinguished guests. I would like to begin by joining others in thanking Minister Schelling, Ambassador Raunig, and the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship; as well as Ambassador Žugić, Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, and your entire team, for organizing this week's 25th concluding meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum. Thank you, as well, to Deputy Foreign Minister Tlapa and the Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic for graciously hosting our Forum again this year. Finally, we appreciate the speeches by our keynote speakers: Ambassador Algayerova from the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), President Chatardova of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and Professor Sachs. We fully support the OSCE's cooperation with UNECE, ECOSOC, and other UN agencies, including on implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Thank you for coming.

The United States looks forward to building on the constructive dialogue from this year's preparatory meetings, and hearing from expert colleagues in government, academia, civil society, the business sector, and regional and international organizations. We welcome ideas on how the OSCE can best address challenges in economic and environmental issues, and what role participating States can play.

As we have said before, economic development and connectivity, good governance, and addressing environmental concerns are critical to addressing the OSCE's underlying commitment to security across the region. The United States is pleased that the Austrian Chairmanship and OSCE Office of Economic and Environmental Activities remain steadfast in targeting these areas.

In the Forum this week in Prague, we are focused on two main questions: how to promote economic participation, and how to green our economy while fostering environmental cooperation in the OSCE area. Both are critical in the medium- to long-term development of a more stable and secure OSCE region.

Efforts to promote economic participation will further help us meet important OSCE commitments in combatting corruption, improving governance, and countering violent extremism across participating States. Employers, workers' unions, and educational

institutions must be part of this conversation. Strengthening legal and institutional structures in participating States will boost investment, support the fight against corruption, and create a welcoming environment for businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, which are the drivers of economic growth. At the same time, a better business environment will create greater employment opportunities for youth, which may help address radicalization and violent extremism. More jobs will also create demand for improvements in each country's education system, eroding another source of radicalization: ignorance.

An initiative to green the economies and foster environmental cooperation between participating States will help us meet our OSCE commitments in water, energy security, disaster risk reduction, good governance, and connectivity. Water shortages, natural disasters, a lack of energy security, hazardous waste, climate change, and wasted resources all pose direct threats. Again, good governance and anti-corruption efforts are critical components to ensuring a sustainable solution.

The United States particularly looks forward to this afternoon's session on "The Way to Vienna." We welcome this discussion to reach a shared agenda on economic and environmental activities towards the promotion of security.

Once again, the United States thanks Ambassador Raunig and the Austrian Chairmanship, and Coordinator Žugić and your staff, for all of your work organizing this week's Forum. Thank you, as well, to Deputy Foreign Minister Tlapa and the Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic for hosting. We look forward to everyone's active participation in discussions as we work to increase security and cooperation in the OSCE region through the Second Dimension.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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