



**Statement by Ambassador Luca Fratini
Deputy Permanent Representative of Italy to the OSCE**

**Opening session of the First Preparatory Meeting of the 27th Economic and
Environmental Forum**

Vienna, 28 January 2019

Mr. Chair,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Italy is pleased to join the previous distinguished speakers in thanking the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship and the Office of the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities for organizing this First Preparatory Meeting of the 27th Economic and Environmental Forum, focusing on energy co-operation, new technologies, good governance and connectivity in the digital era.

These topics build on the work of previous OSCE Chairmanships and, as underlined by the Secretary General - whom I thank for his very insightful opening remarks - are all areas in which the Organisation adds distinct value.

Although Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union, I wish to offer some additional reflections on the topics of this meeting.

As OSCE Chair in 2018, Italy has sought to reinforce the effectiveness of the Organization by “adjusting” its Economic and Environmental Dimension to the rapidly evolving economic dynamics brought about by the ongoing digital transformation. In fact, although the outcome of this transformation is still uncertain, the implications for the security of our countries are so substantial that we could no longer delay getting to grips with this issue.

Last December, our foreign ministers gathered in Milan and agreed on two deliverables in the second dimension: a decision on *Human capital development* and a declaration on the *Digital economy*.

As stated by the Chair of the Permanent Council, Ambassador Bohac, dear Rado, the two Ministerial documents timely identify the implications of the digital age for OSCE goals on security and stability, and highlight the scope for the OSCE to take

this agenda forward in the future. The successful adoption of these texts shall be considered as a starting point for a concrete engagement of the participating States on these important issues.

Very much in line with our collective achievements, I wish to recall that, just recently, the UN Secretary General has set the Fourth Industrial Revolution and related challenges among the three top priorities for the UN to focus on in 2019. Moreover, Secretary General Guterres has informed the General Assembly that, this year, the High-level panel on Digital Cooperation will put its spotlight on reducing digital inequality, building digital capacity and ensuring that new technologies benefit everyone.

In this respect, I am particularly pleased to see that the current OSCE Chairmanship has decided to keep the topic high on the agenda of the Economic and Environmental Dimension.

Dear colleagues,

The ongoing digital transformation has an impact on all the areas of work of the OSCE Second Dimension. Such impact is particularly evident on both energy-cooperation and good-governance, which will be major themes of the 2019 Economic and Environmental Forum and in Prague.

Taking into account the increasing needs for a sustainable, resilient and innovative energy sector, it will be vital to foster a meaningful cooperation on how to harness the opportunities provided by the digitalisation in the energy field. At the same time, it's important not to lose sight of the risks that come along with this transformation. As rightly underlined by the Chairperson in Office, H.E. Miroslav Lajčák, during his opening statement, although we are unable to predict what the future will bring, we nonetheless shall start thinking about future threats with a view to make the OSCE capable of addressing not only present, but also future, challenges to our common space.

Furthermore, as stability and security can only be pursued through good governance, we must also look at ways to ensure that digital innovations are used by governments to increase their accountability as well as to tackle corruption.

In this regard, I am particularly glad that the Slovak Chairmanship has decided to reappoint Prof. Paola Severino as the CiO's Special Representative on combating corruption. I am confident that all participating States recognize the due importance of this issue for their national development and overall security, and will therefore engage with the 2019 Chairmanship to make further progress against corruption. I am convinced that the OSCE could assist all relevant stakeholders to identify suitable policy approaches and best practices on how to promote economic progress and security also in the digital era.

We look forward to interesting and fruitful discussions and stand ready to make our contribution to the Economic and Environmental agenda by supporting the Slovak chairmanship in the course of the year.

Thank you.