



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum 2nd Preparatory Meeting VTC, 15 – 16 June 2020

EU Opening Statement

The European Union and its Member States are pleased to participate in the Second Preparatory Meeting of the 28th Economic and Environmental Forum and would like to thank the Albanian Chairmanship and the OSCE Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities and his staff for organising this meeting and for your flexibility with regards to the current circumstances. We also thank the speakers for their introductory remarks.

We welcome that the Second Preparatory Meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum gives us the opportunity to discuss the topic of corruption from different angles, including the contexts of digital transformation, innovative solutions, environmental protection and management of natural resources.

Corruption represents a threat to security as well as to democracy. Corruption does not occur in isolation and is multidimensional in its character. It is therefore critical to tackle corruption in a comprehensive way, with appropriate legislation, training and awareness-raising and solid institutions, which should be able to carry out their mandate without political interference.

Corruption affects all OSCE participating States and we are convinced that efforts to prevent and combat this global phenomenon must be stepped up. The 2019 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index shows that the efforts deployed

in recent years, for instance enhancement of anti-corruption legislation or creation of anti-corruption agencies, are paying off.

Furthermore, as underlined by both GRECO and the World Bank, the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbates the risk of corruption, with the health sector being particularly exposed, and the measures taken by the governments, leading in many cases to widespread, temporary unemployment, are greatly affecting the most vulnerable in the population. We should not allow COVID-19 to hinder our anti-corruption efforts or to compromise our values and our standards, including transparency and accountability.

On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated, as indeed has this Forum, that digital technologies have the potential to play an even more important role in our lives, our work, as well as in the fight against corruption.

We welcome that this meeting brings together speakers to discuss different aspects of combating corruption, from promoting transparency and accountability, good governance, management of natural resources, combatting money laundering, the fight against transnational organised crime or illicit trafficking in natural resources, to environmental management and disaster risk reduction.

We would like to also stress the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach, involvement of civil society and the private sector, as they are crucial partners in our fight against corruption.

We are looking forward to the fruitful discussions in the coming two days and we stand ready to engage constructively in the topics selected by the Albanian chairmanship.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country LIECHTENSTEIN, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, ARMENIA, ANDORRA, GEORGIA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.