



EUROPEAN UNION

28th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum Prague, 10 – 11 September 2020

EU Closing Statement

The European Union and its Member States would like to thank the Albanian Chairmanship and the OSCE Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities and his staff for organising this meeting and the Czech Republic for hosting the Forum. We would also like to thank all speakers for their presentations, the moderators for stimulating our debates and all participants for their contributions, which hopefully moved us a little closer to finding a common language.

We were pleased to be part of the 28th Economic and Environmental Forum which has provided a valuable opportunity to learn more about the problem of corruption from different angles and exchange views on this important issue, taking also into account the wider context of sustainable development and environmental protection. This includes also the side event on *The Charter of Paris and Environmental Security Challenges* organised by the informal Group of Friends on the Environment.

We have listened with interest to the various presentations, as well as interventions by participating States. Some of them confirmed the urgency and scale of the issue of corruption while also demonstrating that the efforts already being put into the fight and prevention of corruption are paying off. Some of the presentations challenged our beliefs about the right solutions and stressed the need to base our work and policies on solid data.

In the past two days, we had ample confirmation that digital technologies are extremely useful in our efforts in combating and preventing corruption, increasing transparency and sharing information among the stakeholders. In the same time, we should stay cautious about the threats and potential misuse that come with the use of digital technologies and sensitive data. Furthermore, we should not forget that digital technologies remain the means for a comprehensive multi-stakeholder approach in preventing and combating corruption, not the purpose in itself.

This Forum has also demonstrated the gravity of the impact of corruption on the environment, sustainable management of natural resources and wildlife in the OSCE area. It stressed the links between trafficking of wildlife and natural resources and our security and inclusive economic growth, as well as the urgency to enhance our efforts in tackling crime that damages the environment.

We hope that these discussions validated the need to move past the excuse of “lack of political will” towards action and we are looking forward to continuing the discussion on the topic over the drafts of Ministerial Council deliverables.

Despite different opinions on the form of the deliverables, this Forum has clearly illustrated that the two topics presented by the Albanian Chairmanship for possible Ministerial Council deliverables in the second dimension are relevant, timely and are broadly supported. We look forward to working with all participating States to identify the best way to deepen our commitments in these areas.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm the EU's readiness to continue engaging constructively in discussions on economic and environmental issues, as well as in the run-up to the Ministerial Council, which we hope will produce tangible and balanced results.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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