



EUROPEAN UNION

26th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum Concluding Meeting Prague, 5-7 September 2018

EU Opening Statement

The European Union and its Member States wish to thank the Czech Republic for hosting the 26th meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum. We also thank the Italian Chairmanship and the OSCE Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities, Ambassador Žugić, and his team for organising this meeting, as well as the keynote speakers for their presentations.

The topic of this year's Economic and Environmental Forum – Promoting economic progress and security in the OSCE area through innovation, human capital development, and good public and corporate governance – has provided a good opportunity to continue and deepen our work on important topics such as good governance, connectivity and economic participation while also exploring new areas.

The crosscutting topic of digitalisation is a very timely one. It impacts our societies in many ways and is also on the top of the EU's political agenda – as has been outlined by Director General Viola.

We thank the chairmanship for the food for thought paper on possible Ministerial Council deliverables. We support the intention to work on two Decisions on "security aspects of the digital transformation" and on "human capital development". Both areas bear potential for enhanced common efforts within the OSCE area. Being a regional security organisation and a forum for political dialogue, we regard the OSCE as well-placed to facilitate the exchange of best practices and to stimulate further compliance of participating States with international commitments in these fields.

We appreciate that throughout the 26th Economic and Environmental Forum and in other meetings in the 2nd dimension we have had the opportunity to engage with a large variety of relevant stakeholders including from the business community, civil

society, OSCE field operations, Aarhus Centres, and other international organisations. Such interaction is crucial in order to ensure that our work stays relevant.

We look forward to fruitful discussions in the coming days. Let me assure you that the EU and its Member States are ready to constructively engage in discussions and negotiations here in Prague and in our work leading up to the Ministerial Council in Milano.

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

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