



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

21st OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

“Increasing stability and security: Improving the environmental footprint of energy-related activities in the OSCE region”

Concluding Meeting, 11 – 13 September 2013, Prague

Closing Session, Friday, 13 September 2013

Concluding remarks

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Dear Ambassador,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Closing the Concluding Meeting of the 21st OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum on ‘Environmental footprint of energy-related activities’, I first of all would like to take the opportunity to thank the Ukrainian Chairmanship for having proposed this highly relevant theme, which doubtlessly is of utmost importance today and in the years to come in our region. The presence of so many participating States delegates, representatives of key partner organizations, civil society and the private sector proves that the world’s energy demand calls for discussion on the environmental aspect of energy-related activities.

Let me also thank all those who have contributed to the success of our fruitful and constructive discussions in the last three days and during two preparatory meetings in Vienna and Kyiv. The excellent presentations and contributions by participants, from the stage and from the floor have proved that there are ways to efficiently increase the security in the OSCE region by mitigating the environmental impact of energy-related activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The environmental impact of energy production, transportation and consumption is increasing every year. We must therefore be aware of our responsibility and strengthen our efforts in combatting these global environmental threats. Further discussions, activities and events based on our previous work in this field are required. With this aim we should try to improve our performance and overcome our weaknesses. In this effort, the OSCE has a key role to play as a platform for co-operation and discussion in the fields of energy and environment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During the Concluding Meeting of the Forum, we have moved forward in a productive way and have come to some specific, positive results and conclusions. I am pleased to have noted the general consensus throughout the Forum process on the fact that our efforts in concert are much more promising than struggling alone. Having reached the end of this year's Forum Process, I would like to share with you some of the recommendations that have arisen from our debates.

As it was emphasized many times, the OSCE is well equipped to be a platform for broad dialogue, cooperation and sharing experiences, different views and best practices in the field of energy-related activities. This dialogue should include topics such as energy efficiency, new technologies, technology transfer, and appropriate legislative frameworks. We should make use of this platform to enhance international co-operation at all levels: among governments, international, regional and non-governmental organizations, civil society, the business community, academia, development agencies and the financial institutions. The OSCE could advance partnerships on the international level among different regions and countries and promote public-private partnerships. We had the opportunity to gain valuable insights in public-private co-operation thanks to the speakers of Session IV.

As was pointed out, more emphasis needs to be placed on supporting relevant international and regional legal instruments related to the impact of energy-related activities on the environment and facilitate their implementation.

On a demand-driven basis, support could be offered to participating States who wish to improve their national legislation and standards in areas such as energy efficiency, energy savings, or the use of alternative sources of energy. No less important is the role that civil society should play in decision-making process on environmental and energy-related issues. Both policy recommendations and energy projects can become more robust and more responsive to environmental needs if civil society has an ample opportunity to participate in their elaboration. Continued involvement of civil society, including through the Aarhus Centres network and in co-operation with the OSCE field operations, seems to be an appropriate approach.

Moreover, let me remind you that our discussion has identified the need for increased awareness of the link between the environment and energy-related activities as one of the important recommendations. The role of the OSCE in providing capacity-building on energy diversification, use of renewable energy resources and energy efficiency was also stressed as a valuable contribution to promoting sustainable energy. Given its extensive track-record of transboundary environmental cooperation, the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) should also be duly considered in this regard.

One more important conclusion that we can draw, based on our lively panel discussion on Wednesday, is that energy and its environmental footprint are very much linked with environmental good governance. Transparency is one of the most important elements in achieving good governance as it reduces the risk of corruption, and helps governments be accountable for spending natural resource revenues. Transparency also helps companies operate with the free, prior, and informed consent of affected communities and reduces the risk of conflict associated with resource development. I very much welcome enlightening interventions made by representatives of Publish What You Pay, the EITI Albania and other esteemed speakers at this panel. The OSCE can also work with other organizations to support its participating States in promoting high standards of transparency.

Finally, let me once again stress the importance of the mainstreaming of sustainable development considerations into energy policies at national level and energy co-operation at all levels, to address local and regional environmental impacts of energy-related activities as well as such planetary-scale impacts as climate change.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

These were just some of the recommendations resulting from the 21st OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum process. This year's Forum process has again provided us with a great opportunity to consolidate our knowledge and streamline our vision. Therefore, I would like to encourage Delegations to duly reflect on all the Forum's ideas and recommendations, and to contribute to shaping our follow-up engagements and activities. I hope to see the Forum's conclusions and recommendations transferred into political engagements that reinforce our commitments.

My Office will prepare a Consolidated Summary of this meeting which will be made available to all of you in the coming weeks.

Before closing this meeting, I would like to thank again all those who have contributed to the Forum's success – the Ukrainian Chairmanship, the Moderators, Speakers and Rapporteurs, the interpreters, the conference services' staff, as well as the colleagues from my Office.

Thank you.