



## EUROPEAN UNION

# Second Preparatory Meeting of the 30<sup>th</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum 23 – 24 May 2022, Łódź

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### EU Opening Statement

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1. The European Union and its Member States are pleased to participate in the Second Preparatory Meeting of the 30th Economic and Environmental Forum. We would like to thank the Polish Chairmanship, as well as the OSCE Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities and his team, for organising this meeting.
2. We would also like to thank the speakers for their introductory remarks, which gave us a glimpse into the scope of the discussions we will be engaging in over the next two days. This year's Economic and Environmental Forum, focusing on *“Promoting security and stability in the OSCE area through sustainable economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic”*, is a valuable opportunity to further deepen and broaden our work on this issue. However, over the past three months, it has been Russia’s premeditated, unprovoked, unjustified and brutal war of aggression against Ukraine and its people, not the Covid-19 pandemic, that has shaken Europe and the OSCE to its core, majorly disrupting societies and economies.
3. The economic and environmental damage afflicted by Russia on Ukraine is appalling. Russia’s invasion is damaging Ukraine to such a profound extent that the economy, environment and health of inhabitants of Ukraine could suffer

adverse consequences for years. It is thus crucial that the OSCE addresses and alleviates the devastating impact of this war on the environment and the Ukrainian economy in the whole of Ukraine, including by strengthening disaster risk management, supporting water resource management, and supporting Ukraine's transition towards sustainable energy infrastructure.

4. Hospitals, schools, houses, roads, bridges, railroads, theatres and factories will all have to be rebuilt. As European Council President Charles Michel stressed at the High-level international donors' conference for Ukraine on 5 May, the European Union will help to rebuild a modern, prosperous, and democratic Ukraine and economy. The OSCE, with its unique toolbox, will also play an important role in developing sustainable, resilient, and climate-adapted post-conflict reconstruction action plans.
5. In our meeting today and tomorrow, we will discuss opportunities for reinforcing resilience, green growth, sustainability and recovery in our societies and economies. We are pleased that environmental protection and sustainable recovery, as well as energy efficiency and security are included in the agenda of this Forum. We also welcome the focus on digital and technological innovations in the last session of this meeting, which we consider to be a prerequisite for economic growth, prosperity and competitiveness and consequently for stability and well-being in our societies. These are not ordinary times. Following Russia's blatant violations of international law and OSCE commitments, these topics must be discussed in the current context.
6. We are committed to building a better, more resilient, inclusive, gender equal and sustainable future, particularly through the twin green and digital transitions. In this regard, we remain dedicated to supporting co-operation between OSCE participating States on areas such as climate change, sustainable management of natural resources, innovation and economic recovery, which will modernise and re-orient our economies and societies for the better.
7. In conclusion, we would like to express our continuous support to the Polish Chairmanship and we are looking forward to fruitful discussions over the next two days.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, 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.