



United States Mission to the OSCE

Opening Statement – Concluding Meeting 24th Economic and Environmental Forum

As delivered by Kate Marie Byrnes
U.S. Deputy Permanent Representative
Prague, Czech Republic
September 14, 2016

Good afternoon, fellow delegates, representatives, and distinguished guests. I would like to start by thanking Special Representative Dr. Erler and the German OSCE Chairmanship, Secretary General Zannier, and Dr. Yigitguden, Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, for organizing this week's concluding meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum. Thank you as well to Foreign Minister Zaorálek and the Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic for graciously hosting our Forum again this year. We look forward to continuing the constructive dialogue from this year's preparatory meetings and hearing from our esteemed colleagues and experts from academia, NGOs, the business sector, and international organizations as we consider how the OSCE can contribute to improving good governance on a range of issues. We also welcome recommendations on the steps we as OSCE participating States can take to meet our commitments.

Strengthening security in the OSCE region through enhanced economic connectivity and good governance are important priorities. As we have noted before, the United States is pleased that the German Chairmanship and the OSCE Office of Economic and Environmental Activities are focusing on these topics in 2016. The issues that we will discuss at this Forum lie at the very heart of the OSCE's Second Dimension. Improving the business and investment climate in support of sustainable economic development; harnessing the power of the private sector in fighting corruption, money-laundering, and terrorism financing; facilitating trade and ensuring good governance in supply chains; the importance of effective environmental governance; and making sure all of us are meeting our commitments on migration and opening our labor markets.

The importance of promoting good governance cannot be overstated. We are pleased that this remains a priority for the OSCE's economic and environmental dimension. Good governance is the foundation of effective government, economic and environmental policies, regulatory frameworks, adherence to the rule of law, and engagement with civil society and the general public. The United States continues to attach particular importance to the OSCE's work to prevent, combat, and prosecute corruption. The security of all OSCE participating States is affected by the scourge of corruption and its corrosive effect on democratic progress, respect for human rights, government accountability, social inclusion, and inclusive economic growth.

The United States welcomes the effort to increase economic ties among OSCE participating States, particularly those in the Caucasus and Central Asia. By removing barriers to cross-

border cooperation, supporting trade facilitation and customs cooperation, and improving the regional investment climate, the OSCE and its participating States can foster more sustainable growth across the region. Regional efforts designed to improve economic connections in the Caucasus and Central Asia, such as the New Silk Road initiative and the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program, can be enhanced by OSCE activities in the region.

Mr. Chair, in this same room one year ago, the U.S. delegation joined others in calling for the OSCE to do more to involve the private business community in its Second Dimension work. As we emphasized then, given the right policy, regulation, and incentives, the private sector can play an important role in helping develop innovative solutions to some of our most challenging problems. At the conclusion of last year's Economic and Environmental Forum, Ambassador Antje Leendertse, Head of the Task Force for the 2016 German OSCE Chairmanship, agreed and committed to do more in this area. One year later, we would like to acknowledge the impressive progress that has been made in meeting this commitment. Representatives from the businesses community have played an active and constructive role throughout the 2016 German Chairmanship. Their participation in the various economic and environmental dimension meetings and conferences, and in particular at the Chairman-in-Office Connectivity Conference in Berlin, has been invaluable in helping us understand various issues, the impacts of policy on the private sector, and how to creatively solve challenges that remain. We wholeheartedly appreciate this effort and fully believe the OSCE's Second Dimension work is more effective and relevant as a result.

On a final note, we look forward to this afternoon's session The Way to Hamburg. We welcome this important discussion, moderated by the new Chairperson of the Economic and Environmental Committee, Ambassador Vuk Žugić, on the way forward.

In closing, we again thank Dr. Erler and the German Chairmanship, Secretary General Zannier, and the OSCE Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities Dr. Yigitgüden for their dedication and commitment to organizing this week's activities. Thank you again to Foreign Minister Zaorálek and the Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic for so graciously hosting us. As we proceed with the important work of increasing security through the Second Dimension, we look forward to the active participation of all.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.