

21ST OSCE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

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

SECOND PREPARATORY MEETING

Kiev, 16-17 April 2013

Opening Remarks

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Your Excellency, Minister Kozhara,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to start my welcoming statement by expressing my gratitude for the warm hospitality of Ukrainian Chairmanship, who provided this beautiful, historic and inspiring venue – the Diplomatic Academy – for our meeting and facilitated excellent conditions for our deliberations. I also highly appreciate the commitment of the Ukrainian Chairmanship towards further consolidating the OSCE’s economic and environmental dimension as well as the co-operation my Office has established with the Chairmanship’s team in Vienna.

Distinguished participants,

Today, we start the Second Preparatory Meeting of the 21st Economic and Environmental Forum, dedicated to improving the environmental footprint of energy-related activities in the OSCE region.

During this meeting, we should identify ways and means to further strengthen the co-operation among OSCE participating States, as well as with other relevant stakeholders, in the area of new, renewable and cleaner sources of energy, as well as on promoting Green Growth, innovation and technology transfer in these fields. I do hope our discussions will

help us strengthen the OSCE's political commitments and engagement in promoting of sustainable energy solutions.

From the very outset, I want to emphasize that our Forum's deliberations should not be confined to exchanging views among Government representatives alone. If we want to be successful and make progress in developing and implementing sustainable energy solutions, we should seek and encourage an active and stronger involvement of civil society and the private sector. The issues on our agenda concern all of us and every citizen, man or woman, should have the right to contribute and have a say and be empowered to do so. That is why the OSCE promotes and supports a participatory approach and a broad-based decision-making process regarding energy and environment issues, which includes all relevant stakeholders. This is a key component of good governance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are all aware of the global effects of energy production and use, particularly of fossil fuels. Their adverse effects on climate change and environment -including air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and negative impacts on ecosystems, water, animals, plants and people -are among the humankind's biggest challenges, with potentially critical security and stability implications. In the context of projected increase in energy demand over the next decades, addressing these challenges becomes a matter of urgency. These facts should determine each participating State, each government, industry and individual to take effective measures in order to reduce such environmental threats and to support sustainable socio-economic development.

Developing renewable and cleaner energy technologies are essential contributors to sustainable energy and, generally, to energy security.

Moving towards energy sustainability will require changes not only in the way energy is supplied, but in the way it is used. Reducing the amount of energy required to deliver various goods or services is essential. Along renewable energy, energy savings and energy efficiency are the main pillars of sustainable energy policy, because the cleanest and most economic form of energy is the one which does not have to be used.

Innovative solutions are required, both on the supply side, as well as on the demand side. On the supply side, we've heard much about the nonconventional or shale revolution currently underway in North America. But beyond these headlines much good work is being done in other areas, such as the production of methane – a form of natural gas – from the types of coal beds which are, for example, abundant in our host country, Ukraine.

Not less important is focusing on 'green growth', aiming at the same time at economic growth and environmental protection. Together with innovation, going green can be a long-term driver for economic growth, by, for example, investing in renewable energy and

improved efficiency in the use of energy and materials. An active co-operation with the energy industry is crucial in this regard.

In the next sessions we will hear about recent progress and positive developments from across the OSCE region related to a variety of new energy sources such as solar, wind or biomass. We will look at aspects related to policies and incentives as well as to innovation and technology. Our focus should be on how to overcome current inefficiencies and untapped the huge potential of new, renewable and clean energy resources, which could indeed bring concrete dividends to many participating States.

Dear participants,

The OSCE can provide a platform for dialogue and for the exchange of best practices and information on renewable energy, new technologies and appropriate legislative, institutional and policy frameworks. This is what our Forum process is about. Our overall goal should be to identify the areas where the OSCE can bring added value and define its possible contribution to enhance co-operation in the field of energy, environment and security.

As well, making use of its political character, the OSCE can provide support to its participating States with regard to relevant international and regional legal instruments, conventions and protocols, and facilitate the implementation by participating States of existing mechanisms aiming at preventing negative impact of energy-related activities on the environment.

The contribution of the OSCE Field Operations is very important in reaching our goals. They are working closely with their host countries and provide assistance in areas such as sustainable energy, sound management of natural resources, water management, soil degradation and waste. As well, they contribute by raising environmental awareness and promoting public participation in environmental decision-making.

The OSCE Office in Tajikistan, together with the Tajik-Norwegian Small Hydro Power Initiative, supported the development of private investment in small hydro-power in the country, including through the preparation of a comprehensive action plan. It also sponsored, in 2012, the 3rd Regional Exhibition on Energy Saving Technologies and Recycling, which, *inter alia*, demonstrated energy saving prototypes made by approximately 50 participants – including schoolchildren – from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

The OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan supported the drafting of a national strategy and action plan on renewable energy development and facilitated visits by Uzbek delegations to Germany and Spain to study best practices in the field of renewable energy.

The OSCE Office in Baku has also been actively engaged in promoting best practices for the legal and regulatory framework for renewable energy sources and facilitated the exchange ideas between representatives of State institutions, NGOs, local energy companies,

academies, research centres, international agencies, etc. It has also contributed to the dialogue on water policy in Azerbaijan, and facilitated consultations on a new bilateral water agreement between Azerbaijan and Georgia.

The OSCE Centre in Ashgabat initiated and organized a series of training workshop on Energy Diplomacy.

These are just few examples but many more could be provided from the work carried out by the OSCE Missions to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia, Presence in Albania, Centres in Bishkek and Astana, or our Offices in Yerevan etc, as well as by the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in our host country, Ukraine.

I would like to thank my colleagues in the field presences for their tireless efforts and strongly encourage them to actively participate and contribute to our Forum's discussions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This meeting provides a unique opportunity for us all to exchange knowledge and experience.

Let us use this Forum fully to identify areas for further improvement and to strengthen our co-operation in promoting environmentally sustainable energy management for the benefit of sustainable socio-economic development, stability and security.

By complementing each other and by working together, we will be more effective and more successful in addressing evolving common challenges.

I would therefore like to encourage all of you to actively participate in the discussions and to suggest topics for further elaboration at the Concluding Forum Meeting in Prague and beyond.

Thank you for your attention.