



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **27<sup>th</sup> Economic and Environmental Forum Prague, 11-13 September 2019**

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#### **EU Opening Statement**

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The European Union and its member States are pleased to participate in the concluding meeting of the 27th Economic and Environmental Forum, and would like to thank the Slovak Chairmanship and the OSCE Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities and his staff for organising this meeting. We also thank the speakers for their introductory remarks

The topic of this year's Economic and Environmental Forum - Promoting economic progress and security in the OSCE area through energy co-operation, new technologies, good governance and connectivity in the digital era - has provided a good opportunity to continue and deepen our work on important topics such as good governance, connectivity and energy security in the light of digitalization.

We thank the chairmanship for the food for thought paper on possible Ministerial Council deliverables on “security implications of the digital transformation” and on “energy co-operation to increase energy security and sustainability”.

The crosscutting topic of digitalisation is a very relevant one for the security of the OSCE participating States. It impacts all aspects of our societies and is a key priority for the European Union. In the EU, the Digital Agenda forms one of the seven pillars of the Europe 2020 Strategy which sets objectives for the growth of

the European Union, including the creation of a digital single market able to generate smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe.

Energy security is also a top priority for the European Union. Affordable, secure, safe and sustainable energy is indispensable for growth, prosperity and security in the OSCE region.

In February 2015 the European Commission set out its energy strategy to ensure that the EU is able to meet its challenges. The strategy focuses on five key areas: securing supplies; expanding the internal energy market; increasing energy efficiency; reducing emissions; and fostering research and innovation. In 2016 the Commission has also presented a package of measures for energy security, which will minimise interruptions to supply. For the first time, the EU has introduced a solidarity principle according to which, as a last resort, neighbouring Member States will help ensure gas supplies to households and essential social services in the case of a severe crisis.

Energy is also closely interlinked with the topics of sustainable development and environmental protection is, therefore, an integral part of the organisation's comprehensive approach to security as well as a key issue in the OSCE's Economic and Environmental Dimension. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change guide the EU activities towards a sustainable, secure, just and green future. In this framework, EU countries have agreed a target of at least 27 % for energy efficiency by 2030 and a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40 %.

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 relevant international commitments in these two very relevant areas.

In conclusion, we are looking forward to fruitful discussions in the coming days and stand ready to engage constructively in discussions and negotiations here in Prague and in our work leading up to the Ministerial Council in Bratislava.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\*, and ALBANIA\*, the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as MOLDOVA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\*The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Albania, continue to be part of the Stabilization and Association Process.