



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

28th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

“Promoting security, stability and economic growth in the OSCE area by preventing and combating corruption through innovation, increased transparency and digitalization”

Second Preparatory Meeting

15-16 June 2020

Via Zoom

Concluding Remarks

Ambassador Vuk Žugić

Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities

Mr. Moderator,
Ms. Milo,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me thank all distinguished representatives of participating States, academia, private sector, moderators and our international partner organizations as well as colleagues from the OSCE Field Operations for participating and contributing to this Second Preparatory Meeting of the 28th Economic and Environmental Forum, which was held via Zoom.

I would like to express my appreciation for the insightful discussions and constructive ideas put forward over the last two days. This meeting showed the virtue of the OSCE as a unique platform to bring together different stakeholders and connecting them in an active dialogue even in the times of closed borders, lockdowns and economic uncertainties.

In the last two days we have discussed the benefits of digitalization in improving investment climate, promoting economic participation and increasing transparency. We shared experiences on the use of new technologies in preventing and combating corruption and

money-laundering. We also discussed the sound management of natural resources and the role of digitalization in addressing the risks of corruption in the area of environmental protection.

We have also learnt that there are many ways in which digitalization and the use of new technologies could contribute to the enhanced security and stability in the OSCE area. In this regard, it is important to, once again, underline the need for a continued and reinforced dialogue among participating States on how to jointly overcome the security challenges brought by corruption and how to make the most of new digital technologies and tools.

Dear colleagues,

Counteracting threats and challenges caused by corruption can make a crucial contribution to security, stability and democracy in the OSCE region. Deepening economic disparities, lack of rule of law, weak governance, and corruption are among the factors that contribute to global threats such as terrorism, violent extremism, transnational organized crime, as well as to illegal economic activities, including money-laundering, financing of criminal networks and terrorism, trafficking of all kinds, and illegal migration.

Alternatively, good economic and environmental governance leads to the maximization of economic benefits and promotes sustainable development. Access to information, open data, transparency of budgets and procurement procedures, anti-corruption proofing of draft legislation, and strong whistle-blower protection in both the public and private sectors are necessary in order to enable citizens to take charge and contribute to improving good governance and effectively prevent corruption in all sectors and segments of national economies. I am convinced that embracing the benefits of the technological change as a tool to promote corruption free, transparent and accountable societies will enhance security and stability in the OSCE area and beyond.

In this regard, the Office continues to provide advice and assistance to the participating States by implementing projects aimed at responding to their needs and requests.

Last year we started a project aimed at increasing the capacity to prevent corruption by strengthening transparency and improving public sector integrity and accountability of national and subnational authorities through the use of open government data and digital technologies.

In another project, focused on increasing efficiency and transparency of municipal administrations in Ukraine, the OCEEA promotes digitalization as one of the important factors in improving the quality of municipal governance.

Jointly with TNTD, we continue to implement a comprehensive project that strengthens the ability of governments in the Western Balkans to seize, manage, and re-use assets from illicit activities. The project also enhances the effectiveness of the fight against transnational organized crime by improving and promoting regional cooperation through different platforms.

In Armenia, we continue to assist the government in implementing its Strategy to Combat Corruption 2019-2022 and establishing independent anti-corruption institutions.

We also work with business associations, investors and other regional/international organizations with the aim to develop policy recommendations that could help to create a more positive environment for business and investment in the OSCE region.

Needless to say that the Office stands ready to continue assisting participating States, upon their request, in developing and enhancing needed corruption prevention policies and supporting institutions, facilitating the exchange of best practices and providing policy support.

Mr. Chairman

Strengthening sustainable management of natural resources and use of innovative anti-corruption tools in environmental protection have been the focus of today's sessions. As you know, my Office has been committed to promoting and supporting good environmental governance. Some of our activities are focused on facilitating the implementation of the Aarhus and Espoo Conventions in order to support transition to green economy and ensure inclusive, transparent and accountable decision-making process in this field.

The OCEEA has also focused on addressing transboundary movement of hazardous waste, its trafficking and transportation, in support of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.

Another relevant initiative concerns 'smart cities' led by the Swisspeace and Basel Peace Forum. It focuses on open good governance, resilient infrastructure and innovative green technologies to increase resource efficiency and reduce environmental footprint.

These activities are a part of the OSCE and broader international effort to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, across multiple SDGs.

Before concluding, I would like to thank all our distinguished speakers and moderators for accepting our invitation and sharing their valuable experiences with us. My warm gratitude goes to Special Representative Professor Severino for her efforts in promoting the role of the OSCE in good governance and working with numerous stakeholders in finding patterns of policies to combat and prevent corruption in the OSCE area.

Let me also once again thank the Albanian Chairmanship, particularly our colleagues from Conference Services for their invaluable support, and our interpreters for having facilitated our deliberations.

I am convinced that this meeting provided us with additional insights for our further efforts in these areas as well as in preparation to the discussions that we will hopefully have in Prague in September, as well as at the Ministerial Council in Tirana. But, before, I am particularly looking forward to the successful outcome of the Chairmanship High-Level Conference "Good Governance and the Fight against Corruption in the Digital Era: Strengthening the Principles of Transparency, Integrity and Accountability" which will take place on 6-7 July in Vienna. It will be an excellent opportunity to continue our deliberations, to take stock of our activities and to identify avenues of joint action.

Thank you.