

**27TH OSCE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM
CONCLUDING MEETING
Prague, 11-13 September 2019**

**Welcome speech of H. E. Mr. Tomáš Petříček
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Czech Republic**

Chairman,
Secretary General,
Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege to welcome you all to the Concluding Meeting of the 27th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum. I am especially delighted to welcome the Head of Slovak Chairmanship, my dear colleague Miroslav Lajčák, and Secretary General, Mr. Thomas Greminger.

This year's Forum is devoted to "Promoting economic progress and security in the OSCE area through energy co-operation, new technologies, good governance and connectivity in the digital era".

No doubt the topic is timely and relevant. There can be no security without sustainable development, and there will not be economic development without access to affordable and reliable energy. Good governance, defined by strong institutions, rule of law, universal access to justice and improvement of public services, is not only prerequisite for economic development, but also an important part of security framework in the OSCE region.

Co-operation in the energy sector has a key role to play in promoting security in the OSCE region. All our countries have an interest in safe, secure and affordable energy supplies.

We are grateful to the Slovak Chairmanship for focusing on the energy co-operation and further elaborating on the challenges and opportunities in the digital age, thus continuing the important work of last year's Italian Chairmanship.

The interlinkage between energy and the digital technologies will allow us to further develop renewable energy, decentralise energy production, use energy more efficiently and promote new forms of energy trading. In this regard, secure energy networks, which are resilient to natural hazards, man-made disasters and cyber-attacks, are of crucial importance.

We therefore applaud the OSCE for developing guidelines and implementing capacity-building projects across the region to improve the resilience of their critical infrastructure. With these objectives in mind, the Czech Republic is moving fast to incorporate new technologies that enhance the resilience and reliability of supply at affordable rates. We are also committed to completing fully-integrated internal energy market.

We studied with great interest the Food-for-Thought Paper distributed by the Slovak Presidency last month and consider it a meaningful substance for discussions the following three days. I was especially delighted to note reappearance of the "Good environmental governance in support of sustainable policies and reduction of environmental footprint in the OSCE participating States" among the OSCE priorities.

The reference of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to the OSCE goals is becoming obvious and rightfully so. The environment is a prime example of why it is important to work together toward sustainable future. Environmental hazards do not respect borders. Unprecedented wildfires in Amazon rainforest and Siberia, some of them – allegedly – deliberately set by farmers and loggers, impact the climate globally. I applaud the G7 leaders for having addressed the issue at the recent Summit in France.

Most of us regret that we have failed to reach a consensus on the “Transnational organised crime which damages the environment” decision text at our December meeting in Milan. I strongly encourage you to revert to the topic.

The implications of digitalization on stability and security, economic development and the labour market, good governance and transparency are undisputable.

Reflecting on the co-operation in achieving energy security and transition to digital economy, the two preparatory meetings of the Economic and Environmental Forum in Vienna and Bratislava revealed the importance of joint efforts in addressing energy security challenges and opportunities created by the new technologies in the digital era.

Recognising that digitalisation concerns private sector as well as public administration, the Czech government explicitly set the “eGovernment” as one of its main priorities. This objective is being implemented by the so called “Digital Czech Republic” – a comprehensive strategic framework for the digitalization of the Czech Republic, adopted by the Government in October 2018.

The current security challenges underline the significance of the OSCE as a forum for broad and inclusive dialogue building upon a unique comprehensive security concept.

While the Organisation has been in the past challenged for not being able to effectively address many security-related issues, its Economic and Environmental Dimension offers a unique platform for constructive dialogue in areas where a broad consensus can be reached.

The scope of the dialogue should however be limited to issues directly linked to security, such as protection of critical infrastructure and security of energy supply.

We shall look especially to areas that could contribute to developing a positive agenda. This is largely the role of the Economic and Environmental Dimension, with the ongoing Forum being a prime example of addressing together an issue of common interest. While the second dimension is an important part of a comprehensive security approach, we must avoid duplications with other international economic and environmental platforms.

We believe that there is still a significant room for improvement in implementing the OSCE 2nd dimension commitments. We, the member states, should make sure that the outcomes of the OSCE 2nd dimension are widely applied. The Czech Republic believes that we should gradually move on to some form of enforceability of the commitments.

As far as the 3rd dimension is concerned, the Czech Republic attaches utmost importance to the human-related aspects of the OSCE activities, such as democratization, fostering tolerance and non-discrimination. For these reasons, we have decided to chair the Human Dimension Committee this year. We strive to ensure that Human Dimension Implementation Meeting remains a space for a sincere dialogue with the widest possible participation of civil society representatives.

With regard to the possible outcomes of the OSCE Ministerial Council in December 2019 in the area of the human dimension we could focus our joint efforts - among other issues – also on economic, social, cultural rights.

The implementation of a possible decision of the Ministerial Council could help to improve the position of vulnerable groups, especially the Roma and Sinti, or strengthen the economic independence of women, and ultimately contribute to preventing security or social problems of socially marginalized groups.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On September 11, exactly 18 years ago, the terrorist attacks in the United States changed our security landscape. Since then, the OSCE has become part of the international fight against terrorism and has sought its contribution also by addressing the very roots of the radicalisation of people who feel injustice, who lack a good life perspective, who are indoctrinated with hate and bigotry by false prophets.

This is where the OSCE's political-military dimension intersects with the economic-environmental and human dimensions. The OSCE comprehensive approach to security is not cliché, neither it is a subject of faith. It is a practical recipe we believe in and pursue because it adds value to what we can do together, despite all our differences or even conflict between OSCE participating states - and indeed, the unresolved conflicts are our greatest common challenge.

The easiest way to tackle problems is to prevent them. Conflict prevention, strengthening confidence and security are key elements of the OSCE's 1st dimension. In the OSCE's Autumn Trimester of the Forum for Security Co-operation under the Czech Chairmanship, we will seek to move forward with the modernisation of the Vienna Document, a key tool for political-military confidence, security and transparency among the OSCE participating States.

Confidence among OSCE participating states was once built slowly, but it has recently dramatically eroded due to violations of our fundamental principles - military presence without host country's consent, instigation of conflicts, aggressions, invasions, annexations are imposed doubly - firstly on their victims but also as an agenda for all of us.

As you know, the Czech Republic will in two months celebrate 30 years since the Velvet Revolution of 1989 that resulted in first democratically elected government in 40 years and elevated then dissident Václav Havel to the top constitutional position. Learning from the past, we understand that good governance and security cannot be taken for granted. We must continue to do our best to ensure that future generations will benefit from shared security and universal prosperity in the OSCE region.

These principles are also reflected in the 2019/2020 Czech Visegrad Group Presidency. Guided by the spirit of rationality, openness and inclusivity, we strive to put emphasis on pragmatic and constructive approach to in European agenda. With the motto of "V4 Reasonable Europe", the Czech Visegrad Group Presidency aims to encourage reasonable solutions, revolutionary technologies and reconciling approaches to European formats.

Finally, I would like to use this opportunity to express my gratitude to 2019 Slovak OSCE Chairmanship for outstanding work throughout the year, to the OSCE Documentation Centre in Prague and fellow colleagues at the Foreign Ministry for their support in organising this event. I wish you a productive and enriching debate over the next three days and a pleasant stay in Prague.