



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU Statement – “Possible Ministerial Council Deliverables in the Economic and Environmental Dimension”

We thank the Albanian Chairmanship for preparing and sharing the *Concept paper on Possible Ministerial Council Deliverables in the Economic and Environmental Dimension*. It contains a number of important points that were discussed throughout the year and we believe that they would be of an added value to the mandates of our organisation.

Corruption undermines inclusive economic growth and democracy. It erodes trust in public institutions and stability of our countries. Thus the fight against and prevention of corruption is one of the EU priorities in the Second Dimension. Anti-corruption work and good governance are also an important element of EU-OSCE cooperation throughout the region.

Our discussions on the topic of corruption throughout this year highlighted the significance and the scale of the issue, which without exception affects all countries. It also underlined our common interest in continuing, further deepening and broadening our work on this matter.

During our meetings, we have heard excellent examples on how to improve efficiency in fighting corruption, including harnessing the potential of digital technologies. We believe that the proposed angle offers a good basis on which to build on our work from previous years, while also reflecting on current developments.

We agree that sustainable use of digital technologies can greatly contribute to and increase the efficiency of our efforts in anti-corruption, e.g. through improving transparency, raising public awareness, better information sharing through open data initiatives and free media, as well as faster and easier coordination between anti-corruption bodies and international actors.

This year's discussions in the Economic and Environmental Dimension also emphasized the urgency of our work on environmental issues. Environmental degradation and climate change pose an increasingly severe threat to human health, our economies, as well as the security and stability of our countries.

The EU has been working for decades on tackling environmental issues, both inside the EU and also around the world in cooperation with our partners. Improving resource-efficiency, safeguarding societies from environment-related pressures, as well as protecting natural capital, including biodiversity and natural resources, should be the cornerstones of our efforts in environmental protection.

With regards to the proposed Ministerial Council Decision on "*Protection of the Environment and the Sustainable use of Natural Resources*", we believe that focusing on sustainable use of natural resources, as well as on preventing illegal activities that damage the environment, is something that OSCE is well positioned for to add value and build on synergies with other international organisations.

Sustainable use and management of natural resources is both an economic and environmental issue that should reflect protection of the environment and biodiversity, as well as inclusive economic growth, while also making sure that affected communities can benefit from and have access to those resources.

Illegal activities that damage the environment, including both corruption and trafficking, have devastating effects on biodiversity and sustainable development and are major obstacles to sustainable management of natural resources and protection of the environment. In recent years, the international community has increasingly recognized the linkage between corruption, as a key enabling factor for illegal trade in wildlife, and natural resources. Furthermore, the G20 *Declaration*

on combatting corruption related to illegal trade in wildlife could be one of the international documents to build on in the preparation of the draft of this ministerial deliverable.

We believe that the OSCE, in conjunction with its field offices, can contribute to our global fight against these illegal activities which damage the environment and can be a valuable support to the OSCE participating States in this regard.

To conclude, we welcome your intention to propose two Ministerial Council deliverables on these topics and we see merit in enhancing the OSCE's focus in these areas. The EU stands ready to constructively engage in discussions and negotiations on the two draft deliverables in the coming months and at the Ministerial Council in Tirana. We thank the Chairmanship for its efforts thus far and look forward to continuing our common work.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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