



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

29th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

“Promoting comprehensive security, stability and sustainable development in the OSCE area through women’s economic empowerment”

SECOND PREPARATORY MEETING

Stockholm, 10-11 June 2021

**Ambassador Vuk Žugić
Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities**

Closing remarks

Madame moderator,
Distinguished delegates,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank all moderators, speakers and delegations for their insightful presentations and constructive inputs over the last two days. This was a timely opportunity to reflect on the impact of women economic empowerment for security, stability and sustainable development across the OSCE area.

In particular, I wish to thank the 2021 OSCE Swedish Chairpersonship for the excellent cooperation in the run-up to and during this meeting.

Allow me to share with you few key takeaways from the discussions.

Speakers and experts brought in substantial economic evidence about the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on employment of women and girls. Women make up 39 percent of global employment but account for 54 percent of overall job losses.

Recent data suggest that the pandemic has further exacerbated the already existing gaps in gender parity and that women’s employment is dropping faster than average, despite the fact that women and men work in different sectors.

These worrying trends represents a formidable test for economic stability within and among countries.

As societies worldwide, including in the OSCE area, grapple with the post-pandemic recovery, the discussion emphasized the need to build back better. Taking steps now to redress the balance between the employment prospects for men and women is key to improve social and economic outcomes for millions globally and help boost economic growth for all.

Potential policy areas of intervention include female entrepreneurship, access to quality education, financial services and technology as well as support to women's participation in the labour market. Targeted measures in these areas can constitute important levers to boost economic growth - benefiting the economy as a whole.

It was underscored that trade, transport facilitation and connectivity are important factors that foster co-operation among participating States and prerequisites for economic growth, stability and security in the OSCE region.

However, evidence shows that women continue to be significantly under-represented within the workforce employed in the transport sector. Here there is a need to enhance cooperation with the business community to increase the visibility of women in transport professions and the transmission of information about the range of employment opportunities available in the sector.

At the same time, it was noted how trade rules and the way trade deals are negotiated, can have an impact on women's economic rights and well-being. To ensure public policies related to trade and transport are gender sensitive and serve sustainable development, enhancing the capacity of national institutions to collect and compile gender-disaggregated data assumes primary importance. Only informed and evidence-based decision-making can effectively bridge the gender gap in the areas of trade and transport.

It was also acknowledged that women economic empowerment can play a critical role also in the protection of the environment. Guided by a solid mandate enshrined in a number of Ministerial Council decisions, the OCEEA is implementing concrete activities in areas related to economic empowerment, water management, and energy security and sustainability.

Overall, the meeting clearly reconfirmed the nexus between women economic empowerment and security. To this end, allow me to give a tangible example based on data published by Mc Kinsey. According to its analysis, achieving gender-parity improvements by 2030 could lead to 13 trillion dollars of incremental GDP in that year. This represents an 11 percent increase compared

to the do-nothing scenario, in which policy makers do not take immediate action to make improvements in women employment.

Finally, the discussion also showed that to “build back better” there is a growing need to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, in particular goals related to the gender equality, decent work and economic growth and reduced inequalities. In this context, the OSCE’s comparative advantage is two-fold. It provides a platform for sharing good practices and lessons learned, and, at the same time, can support, upon their request, participating States to advance their efforts in this domain.

I believe the first and second preparatory meeting have provided considerable food for thought on how we can leverage women’s potential towards post-pandemic recovery that benefits everyone. They will provide a meaningful contribution to our further deliberations in Prague in September and the Ministerial Council in Stockholm.

In conclusion, let me once again thank the Swedish Chair, all participants and our interpreters for having facilitated our deliberations.

Thank you.