



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Courtney Austrian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 10, 2022

Ambassador Hasani, dear Igli, the U.S. delegation welcomes you back to the Permanent Council. The 13 months since you assumed your duties as the Coordinator of the OSCE's Economic and Environmental Activities have been unprecedented in terms of the challenges to the fundamental principles and commitments of this Organization. Despite all of that, you have fulfilled your duties admirably during this time and you have our thanks.

Russia's unprovoked, full-scale invasion of Ukraine contravenes our shared commitments to security and cooperation, undermines the post-1945 security architecture of Europe, and has plunged the OSCE region and the world into humanitarian, economic, environmental, and security crises. This alarming state of affairs is the sole responsibility of the Kremlin, which has chosen a path of neo-imperial conquest. Moreover, as documented by three Moscow Mechanism reports, while Russia has engaged in intensified repression at home, its forces have committed brutal atrocities against the people of Ukraine in violation of international law and in contravention of the founding principles of the Helsinki Final Act.

In the face of such abhorrent behavior, we must assess the OSCE's capacity to respond and adapt to these sobering circumstances, which is a challenge for the OSCE in all three dimensions, its Executive Structures, in Vienna and the field. As your report notes, we must also assess how the Second Dimension and OCEEA can provide a forum for cooperation and promote shared values on economic and environmental issues. History shows us the Organization can adapt to the changing circumstances, and we believe OCEEA can do so – and is doing so – by prioritizing four key areas today.

First, we need to mitigate the economic and environmental damage caused by Russia's aggression against Ukraine and its targeting of civilian infrastructure. This is an enormous challenge the people of Ukraine face every day, and the outcome of our own choices here at the OSCE will send a global message. We cannot feed the fiction that the Second Dimension is somehow disconnected from the most immediate, pressing issues around us. We must set the example of a community that works together on a shared challenge. We applaud OCEEA for developing new projects in Ukraine and encourage you to continue to be creative in response to the evolving needs on the ground. Your new extra-budgetary project on "assessing the environmental impacts of the war against Ukraine and options for remediation" is an excellent example of how OCEEA can use its unique security focus and tools to help lead this community on a common effort to mitigate war's consequences.

Second, as your report notes, OCEEA is promoting the security and resilience of energy systems across the OSCE region, and we believe these efforts should be expanded with a focus on resilience, supply diversification, affordability, and the accelerated transition to clean energy. While we all face high prices and fears of scarcity, this situation is most acute in Ukraine, where Russia's missile attacks have imperiled the entire electrical grid. Moreover, the challenge of meeting our climate commitments and net-zero emissions underscores the urgent need to shift to clean energy technologies. OCEEA's assistance to participating States can help address both issues.

Third, OCEEA should continue to develop specific tools to help participating States address the security-related implications of climate change. We applaud your collaboration with field missions to operationalize the mandate that was established in the landmark 2021 Ministerial Council decision. Your recent launch of a new project on "mitigating climate change threats to critical energy infrastructure," which will provide access to actionable and locally relevant climate risk data to energy sector professionals and decision-makers, is a promising line of effort. So too is your creative effort to reach out stakeholders whose engagement on climate issues can make a difference, such as empowering Central Asian women to advance action on water and energy issues. We look forward to further advancing discussions on climate and security when the high-level conference on climate change convenes in March 2023.

Fourth, combating corruption and promoting good governance remains at the forefront of challenges faced by participating States and touches upon virtually all other Second Dimension issues as well as the work of the First and Third Dimensions. We note the valuable partnership OCEEA has forged with UNODC in the new project on combating money laundering via virtual assets, which constructively leverages UNODC's expertise. We applaud your team's collaboration with TNTD on the ongoing project regarding asset seizure and reuse in the Western Balkans, and your responsiveness to participating States who have requested your assistance.

Ambassador Hasani,

The United States greatly values your office's essential support for the Polish Chair, the incoming North Macedonia Chair, the Economic and Environmental Committee, and Second Dimension meetings and events throughout the year. We also commend your outreach to the private sector and civil society, whose insights and contributions are valuable in helping participating States meet Second Dimension challenges. Your leadership and your team's creative and rapid response to unprecedented circumstances have validated OSCE's ability to promote security and cooperation in concrete and meaningful terms. We thank you for your report and your good work. You have our full support.

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