



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1220  
Vienna, 14 March 2019**

**EU Statement in Response to the Report by the  
Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental  
Activities, Amb. Vuk Žugić**

The European Union warmly welcomes the coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, Amb. Vuk Žugić, to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his report. Your timely report and remarks today have very well illustrated the relevance of economic and environmental issues for the security of our countries and citizens – not only as important confidence building measures but also because these cross-cutting issues can directly impact security and stability across our region. We assure you of our continued support for strong OSCE engagement in the Economic and Environmental Dimension. Good economic and environmental governance, combatting corruption, connectivity, sustainable and efficient energy as well as other issues related to sustainable development are priorities for us and we therefore welcome your efforts to further align OSCE activities with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

You have rightly highlighted the digital transformation as a cross-cutting issue that increasingly affects our economies and societies, and we appreciate your commitment to continue to look for possible areas of engagement to respond to challenges and harness potentials. In this respect, we would like to reiterate that we highly welcome the adoption of the two Ministerial Council deliverables on the Digital Economy and Human capital development in the context of digitalization.

We attach particular importance to your work on good economic and environmental governance and the fight against corruption and appreciate that these topics continue to remain among the priorities of your office's activities. Good governance and economic development are two sides of the same coin. Strengthening good governance, inter alia through combatting corruption and fostering the rule of law, is crucial to improve the economic environment across

the OSCE, which in turn contributes to stability and security by fostering prosperity and contributing to trustful and good neighborly relations.

We equally appreciate the focus you put on addressing the security implications of environmental challenges, including those risks arising from climate change. Many pressing issues such as environmental degradation and disasters, climate change, water crises, environmental consequences of crisis situations and conflicts, hazardous waste management, as well as crimes related to the environment deserve global attention and demand collective responses. We regret that it was not possible to reach consensus at the Ministerial Council in Milan on the draft decision on transnational organized crime which damages the environment. Negotiations on this text should resume as soon as possible and we would very much appreciate your active engagement to this end. While these issues can be potential sources of conflict and insecurity, we strongly agree with your assessment that they also represent opportunities to foster dialogue and cooperation, to build trust and diminish tensions, and we highly value the contribution your office makes to addressing them. In this context, we would like to express our support for your office's activities to promote good environmental governance through the ENVSEC initiative and the Aarhus Centres.

The EU also attaches particular importance to strengthening the resilience of critical energy networks, increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy as an effective means to enhance energy security in participating States. Creating and maintaining secure energy networks which are resilient to natural hazards, man-made disasters and cyber-attacks alike, is of crucial importance to economies and societies across the OSCE and we welcome the efforts of your office to increase cooperation, the building of capacities and the sharing of experiences among participating States in this regard. Cooperation in securing the energy supply, transit and demand chain, and the use of safe, new and renewable sources of energy should aim, while making the use of conventional forms of energy more sustainable, at building a vision for the sustainable energy future of the OSCE region. We welcome, that this will be one of the priority topics of the Second Preparatory Meeting of the EEF in Bratislava and in Prague.

We value your continued work on connectivity through transport and trade facilitation in line with the Ministerial Council Decision on Strengthening Good Governance and Promoting Connectivity. We welcome that your office is stepping

up its efforts to increase connectivity and harness the benefits of trade – these efforts can give an important impulse for enhanced cooperation and security in the OSCE region.

Exploiting synergies, joining efforts and coordinating activities among OSCE structures and with other international organisations is key in order to maximize the impact of your office's activities and avoid the duplication of efforts. We equally attach great importance to the active involvement of field operations and strongly support their participation in our discussions here in Vienna. We also encourage the continued involvement of the private sector and of beneficiaries of OSCE activities in participating States. We welcome your intention to make information about your office's work and resources more easily available to participating States.

Ensuring gender mainstreaming across all areas of the OSCE's work remains a priority for the EU and is an essential component of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security. We therefore welcome your commitment to fully and comprehensively incorporate a gender perspective into the activities of your office.

Regarding your deliberations on how the Second Dimension could further contribute to promoting security and stability throughout the OSCE, we would like to hear more from you about the best practices and lessons learned from past Second Dimension activities which have contributed to reducing tensions, building trust and bridging differences among participating States.

In conclusion, we thank you and your team for your valuable work and wish you every success.

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

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