



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum 1st Preparatory Meeting Vienna, 23-24 January 2017

EU Opening Statement

The European Union and its member States are pleased to participate in the first preparatory meeting of the 25th Economic and Environmental Forum, and would like to thank the Austrian Chairmanship and the OSCE Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities and his staff for organising this meeting. We also thank the keynote speakers for their presentations.

The overall topic of the 25th Economic and Environmental Forum – Greening the Economy and Building Partnerships – is, in our view, very well chosen since it covers a broad range of key topics from both the economic and environmental spheres.

In our meeting today and tomorrow we will continue our work on various aspects of good governance. We welcome your decision to keep this important topic high on the agenda and to build on the substantial Ministerial Council decision on “Strengthening Good Governance and Promoting Connectivity” that we agreed upon in Hamburg. Particularly combatting corruption remains a priority for the EU. A well-functioning economy is important for the stability and security of states. We therefore also welcome the focus on business climate and the private sector.

Confidence building is an important element of OSCE activities and can contribute to the reinforcement of peace and security. We underline in particular the confidence building potential of economic cooperation in conflict regions, and appreciate your planned efforts in this direction. We are also looking forward to continuing our discussions on connectivity issues, since successful connections between countries facilitate cooperation and welfare, which in turn may increase stability and security.

We agree that enhancing economic participation is a crucial and very practical step towards strengthening security. It contributes to reducing poverty, fostering social inclusion and cohesion and thus to counteracting radicalisation. Also, women's economic empowerment and independence, including the promotion of women's entrepreneurship, remains critical as it warrants further efforts.

Finally, we welcome the interactive format that you have chosen for our working groups tomorrow and look forward to interesting and fruitful discussions in the next two days as well as further discussions during the Business Conference kindly organized by the Austrian Chairmanship on 25 January.

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

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