



United States Mission to the OSCE

Opening Statement at the 27th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum Preparatory Meeting

As prepared for delivery by Dustin DeGrande, Political Officer
January 28, 2019

Good morning, fellow delegates, representatives, and distinguished guests. I would like to thank the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship and OSCE Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities Ambassador Žugić for organizing this week's preparatory meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum (EEF). This year's EEF builds off the 2017 Italian Chairmanship's emphasis on the digital transformation. We will now apply the concepts we introduced last year into the specific and highly relevant areas of energy cooperation, security, and anti-corruption.

In our National Security Strategy, the United States prioritizes energy as a key issue of interest and concern within the digital transformation. The Strategy recognizes resource diversification as a way to balance energy security, economic development, and environmental protection. Fair, vibrant, rules-based competition, trade, and investment across borders supports diversification. New technologies have a potential to further these goals in parallel with environmental stewardship. We look forward to examining these important concepts here.

As we mentioned last year in this forum, new technologies offer a broad array of new tools to fight and prevent corruption. We have tangible evidence in the OSCE region that digitalizing procurement, trade processes, and business registration procedures reduces opportunities for corruption. Unleashing e-Government solutions that increase transparency and competitiveness in government contracts fosters a more vibrant private sector. U.S. foreign assistance has helped countries around the world in these areas. In Albania, Kosovo, Moldova, and Ukraine we helped build and strengthen transparent and effective institutions for asset trading, developed ICT excellence centers, launched electronic tax filing systems to reduce opportunities for corruption, and created e-procurement systems that make government tenders more cost-effective and transparent.

The United States welcomes the Slovak Chairmanship's commitment to use the EEF to address this wide range of issues within the context of energy security. At the EEF last year, we discussed the digital transformation, good governance, and fighting corruption. We look forward to this Forum delving deeper into these critical issues. Let's move the conversation forward into the specific energy and governance issues that will inform the Ministerial Council in Bratislava.

Once again, the United States thanks the Slovak Chairmanship and Ambassador Žugić for your hard work organizing this week's preparatory forum. These are worthy and weighty

topics, and we look forward to discussing them in a targeted and serious way. We also look forward to vibrant discussions and an open exchange of viewpoints as we strive to fulfill our mandate to improve security and cooperation in the OSCE region via the Second Dimension.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.