



REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

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24th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

"Strengthening stability and security through co-operation on good governance"

FIRST PREPARATORY MEETING

Vienna, 25-26 January 2016



OPENING STATEMENT OF THE REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE (REC)

Delivered on 25 January 2016 by Ms Marta Szigeti Bonifert, Executive Director, REC


Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates and participants,

On behalf of the Regional Environmental Center, we would like to thank the German OSCE Chairmanship and the Office of the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities for organising the 1st Preparatory Meeting of the 24th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum. We would like to thank the Government of Austria for hosting the meeting, and all distinguished delegates and participants for joining us here today on our common mission for a sustainable future where economic growth and environmental protection reinforce each other and contribute to trust and confidence, security and stability.

We welcome the theme of the 24th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum and wish to acknowledge its relevance in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda. Moreover, we greatly commend the efforts of the German OSCE Chairmanship to promote connectivity and good environmental governance, address its impact on investment climate and competitiveness, and increasingly involve the business community in the 2nd dimension of the OSCE. The importance of good governance for economic growth, political stability and security has been long agreed upon by participating countries, and we are all here today to carry forward with our commitments.





We are collectively shifting our focus from response and recovery with immediate benefits towards prevention which has long-term perspective and ensures sustainability. The launching of the Sustainable Development Goals and the recent UNFCCC COP 21 in Paris showed that the global community is ready to see the big picture and take big steps together. Those commitments come to fruition with consistent and consolidated practices of good governance, with independent and robust institutions exerting democratic control, with an active civil society, with the engagement of all stakeholders, and with regional and international cooperation.

Upholding transparency and accountability, combating corruption and illegal practices, and ensuring a multi-stakeholder dialogue are all key elements for achieving good governance. The REC, an international organisation governed by a membership of 32 countries and the European Commission, has been a long-term partner of the OSCE, a catalyst for sustainable solutions in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, and a facilitator for local and participatory governance in all contexts. We help communities to strengthen environmental governance, shift to a low-carbon economy, build resilience to climate change, manage natural resources, and develop capacities for future environmental stewardship.

During this meeting as well as the forthcoming 2nd Preparatory Meeting and the Concluding Meeting we will actively engage in the discussions, present concrete initiatives and projects of the REC, and inform about our best practices and lessons learned from more than 25 years of strengthening environmental governance, fostering transparency, ensuring multi-stakeholder participation and supporting the transition to a circular and low-carbon economy. We look forward to leveraging efforts with the German OSCE Chairmanship, their Troika partners Serbia and Austria, and all OSCE Participating States and Partners for Cooperation to renew dialogue, rebuild trust and restore security.