

**FIRST PREPARATORY MEETING
Opening Statement**

Armenia

Mr. Chairman.

We would like to express our gratitude to the OSCE Slovak Chairmanship and the OSCE Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities, as well as their able teams for organising the First Preparatory Meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum. Our thanks go to the distinguished speakers for shaping framework of our discussions.

We support focus of this year's Forum on information technologies, digital economy and their role in promoting sustainable development, good governance and connectivity. Likewise, the impact of information technologies on preventing and fighting corruption is also very relevant topic. The chosen topics provide opportunity to look at the traditional areas of economic-environmental dimension from a new angle and incorporate new perspectives of digital transformation in our work.

It is hard to underestimate implications of digitalization on the realization of economic and social rights, good governance and connectivity. Use of information technologies as tools for enhancing transparency and accountability and better provision of public services can boost economic participation, competitiveness and realization of economic and social rights.

Digitalization is an increasingly important tool for prevention of corruption. Rapidly expanding e-governance in both public and private sectors in Armenia and provision of electronic services in almost all spheres play a crucial role in this regard.

As you are aware combating corruption is a priority for the Government of Armenia and last year we registered significant progress. We deem OSCE as an important platform for cooperation in addressing this challenge. We appreciate support of Special Representative of the OSCE Chairmanship on Combating Corruption Professor Paola Severino and the Office of Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities in promoting cooperation between Armenia and OSCE. The extra-budgetary project "Strengthening anti-corruption reform in Armenia" is a valuable platform for cooperation with all interested OSCE partners.

Information and communication technologies and telecommunications create new dimension of connectivity, enabling economic cooperation, open and equal access to education and innovations for people in the entire OSCE area and people-to-people contacts across the dividing lines and closed borders. We need to secure open and interoperable Internet, as a tool to promote and protect human rights, including social and economic rights.

Therefore, in the context of our security Organization information technologies and digital connectivity have an untapped confidence building potential. OSCE is an appropriate forum to explore how digitalization and information technologies can promote trust, security and sustainable development. In this regard the adoption of the Ministerial Decision and Declaration respectively on Human Capital Development and on Economic Digitalization creates new directions of cooperation within the OSCE.

We look forward to interesting exchange and stand ready to make our contribution by bringing Armenia's perspective and good practices in digital economy.

Thank you.