OSCE

OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

1st Preparatory Meeting

"Promoting economic progress and security in the OSCE area"

OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger

Vienna, 28 January 2019

Good morning and for those who have travelled here, welcome to Vienna!
Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues,

As the Slovak Chairmanship highlighted in its priorities for this year, rapid technological change, digitalization and innovation provide us with immense opportunities. However, they also pose challenges and threats.

In recent years, we have begun to explore these implications across the three dimensions of security: from cyber-security CBMs, to the protection of critical infrastructure from terrorist attacks, to freedom of expression both offline and online.

The Milan Ministerial Council added the *digital economy as a driver for promoting co-operation, security and growth* – and in particular, the *development of human capital in the digital era* – to a growing list of technology-related topics on our agenda in the Second Dimension.

This year, the Forum Process will help us to dig deeper into how technological change impacts security. This is very positive as we <u>should</u> engage on emerging trends proactively. So I welcome the Slovak Chairmanship's intention to promote further exchange on the security and digitalization nexus.

Dear colleagues,

In its scale, scope and complexity, the digital transformation will be unlike anything humanity has experienced. Although we do not know exactly how it will unfold, or what opportunities and challenges it will bring, one thing is clear: our response should be integrated and comprehensive, involving a wide range of stakeholders, from the public and private sectors, academia and civil society.

Policy-makers will struggle to keep up with the accelerating pace of change. So it is crucial that we debate relevant governance issues early on. We need to steer technology to benefit our societies and to strengthen comprehensive security.

Much of the discussion at this meeting will focus on energy co-operation and good governance. Digitalization is leaving its mark in both these areas.

The impact of the digital economy on how we produce and consume **<u>energy</u>** is already clearly visible. Increasing the use of renewable energy can only work because digital technologies make both consumers and producers more flexible and responsive. At the same

time, the increased monitoring and data gathering capacities of new technologies, and their link to the Internet also carry risks. We need to ensure that the technology is safe and secure, and that privacy rights are respected. This is also a precondition for their acceptance by companies and individuals.

The OSCE is well placed to be a platform for discussion of these rapidly emerging issues. Our mandate in this area – as highlighted for example by the Kyiv Ministerial Council Decisions on *Improving the Environmental Footprint of Energy-Related Activities* and on the *Protection of Energy Networks from Natural and Man-made Disasters* – offers a very good basis for this year's discussions. Indeed, these discussions might prepare the way for updating the OSCE's mandate in the area of energy cooperation.

The impact of digitalization is also widely felt in the areas of **good governance** and the fight against corruption. New digital tools can provide greater access to information, strengthen public accountability and foster civic participation. They can be used to monitor the performance of state institutions and to streamline government processes, enhancing efficiency and reducing corruption. The *Open Government Partnership*, a multi-stakeholder initiative involving more than 70 governments and thousands of civil society organizations, is a prime example. I look forward to joint activities currently in the planning stage with OGP and the OECD.

At the same time, experience shows that new technologies can only be used to tackle corruption if there is a strong institutional background – an independent judiciary and a vocal civil society that is able to make responsible use of the new tools.

In this context, I welcome the decision to extend Professor Paola Severino as Special Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Corruption. We are about to see the tangible result of her efforts last year. This includes laying the groundwork for a major project on strengthening anti-corruption reform in Armenia.

Dear colleagues,

Strengthening e-governance, enhancing economic connectivity, moving towards green energy, and promoting digital security – our success in addressing these issues will depend in large measure on whether we can interact with the private sector in a meaningful manner. Private companies are leading the way on new trends such as artificial intelligence and machine learning. So I look forward to seeing us engage more closely with them during the Forum Process.

We see such co-operation taking hold across the OSCE's comprehensive agenda. For example, combatting trafficking in human beings is one area where technology and security is becoming a central pillar of our action across the three dimensions. Indeed, the theme for this year's Alliance Conference is "*Using Technology to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings: Turning a Liability into an Asset*".

In this and many other areas where technology affects security, the challenge for us is to promote and develop co-operative approaches. Co-operation can limit the risks while encouraging responsible uses of the new technological tools at our disposal.

This first preparatory meeting provides ample opportunities to explore the implications of technological change in key areas in the Second Dimension. Let's be positive about the opportunities and take up this challenge with optimism and determination.

Thank you.