

**30th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum**  
**“Promoting comprehensive security in the OSCE area through sustainable economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic”**  
**Vienna, September 8, 2022**

*Keynote speech by Yaroslav Demchenkov, Deputy Minister of Energy of Ukraine*

My greetings to all the participants, happy to join you at this great event.

Excellencies, Ministers thank you for your words of support to my country.

It is a real honor to be addressing you.

I want to thank the *OSCE*, whose special monitoring mission has been working in Ukraine since March 2014, putting an effort to prevent full-scale Russian aggression.

In *two thousand twenty – twenty-one (2020-21)*, we saw the new pandemic sweep the globalized world and threaten sustainable development.

It's crazy how just a single bat could *cause* such large-scale consequences.

But today the world is facing a pandemic that threatens sustainable development even more.

This is a pandemic of *authoritarianism*), a pandemic of diminishing democratic rights and freedoms.

In February, Freedom House, a watchdog, published a report, saying that autocracy is making progress in the struggle against democracy.

That *authoritarian* leaders are working together to consolidate power and increase an attack on democracy and human rights.

And literally right after this report was released, autocratic Russia began a full-scale war in Ukraine. This resulted in massive civilian *casualties*, war crimes, and destruction of critical infrastructure.

I want to use this opportunity to stress once again that Russia is attacking not only Ukraine, but the global order, international law, freedom and democracy.

Russia's goal is to *spread* the pandemic of *authoritarianism* and global instability.

Russia and its satellites pose a threat to all *mankind* today.

It's hard to believe that just one man could cause such global consequences.

But, unfortunately, same as with the *Wuhan* bat, that's true.

The modern world is too inter-connected, and such events have a *ripple* effect across the world.

And Putin's actions threaten the rest of the world.

Today, this multi-level threat from Russia has become obvious to almost everyone. Even to those governments that *flirted* with Russia in the past, and hoped to keep separate the political and economic components in relations with the Kremlin. But Russia has only one economy, and it's oriented not on improving the lives of its citizens, but on beefing up its military. And there are no *purely* economic goals – these are imperialistic goals that can be dressed in loans, cheap gas or *quasi*-infrastructure projects like the Nord Stream.

Russia is also fighting against climate neutrality and a sustainable future as such. The whole economy of modern Russia is driven by hydrocarbons. For the Kremlin, every step in the direction of climate neutrality is a nail in the coffin.

That's why Russia will always oppose any shift to sustainable energy. And Russia will especially try to use its leverage now, on the eve of the winter season – hoping that higher energy bills and lower temperatures in homes will shift public attitudes in Europe, and the EU leaders will have to agree to Russian energy blackmail.

This situation clearly shows that a carbon-free future and sustainable energy is the only possible way forward, to make sure that energy is not used as a weapon, and human development does not pose a threat to the environment.

The Irish energy minister once said that 'no one has ever weaponized access to the sun. No one has ever weaponized the wind. Perhaps a move to clean energy will be the greatest peace plan the world has ever known'.

In this new reality, the eventual phase-out of hydrocarbons must happen sooner than we planned.

New technologies must stay ahead of existing challenges.

Even before the war, Ukraine focussed on phasing out coal, and decreasing the usage of gas.

Even now, we are planning our recovery as a sustainable and green system.

And we are planning to boost the role of renewables, invest in energy efficiency and foster digital innovations.

Our recovery will match the overall push for decarbonisation.

Our plan is not to restore Ukraine's energy industry as it was before the war, but to build a sustainable industry fit for the 21st century.

But, coming back to the realities of today, the war is still going on.

During the 6 months of the war, more than 5 million people lost electricity supply. But every time, as soon as the shelling stopped - our repair crews were fixing the damage.

And today, our energy sector continues stable operation and remains resilient, despite everything.

I want to thank the countries and organizations that have helped and continue to help us with equipment and facilities including support which provides withing the special Fund created by the Energy Community Secretariat.

This is especially important now, as we are preparing for winter.

Russia's attacks *shatter* against the *shield* of our unity.

Russia's ability to wage war is gradually decreasing thanks to sanctions, because civilized countries are moving away from Russian bloody energy.

Mankind overcame COVID through solidarity, when the virus crossed national borders, and became a challenge for everyone.

And at the same time, it became an example of cooperation and support, when different governments, different organizations and groups of scientists worked to create a vaccine that was available to different countries, regardless of their GDP level.

Today, the world needs a vaccine against *authoritarianism*. And there is the same need for solidarity.

But the *récord* shows that the Covid pandemic, same as our current war, does not put life on hold, and it can't force us to abandon the principles of sustainable development.

On the contrary, these global shocks show us that there is no alternative to sustainable development.

We need a world where energy is not used as a weapon. A world without energy poverty.

A world where clean, sustainable energy is still affordable.

Where energy consumption and a comfortable living do not destroy the planet's eco system.

In a world like this, there will be no place for "hydrocarbon *dictatorships*" because the main source of their power will disappear.

And the "pandemic of *autócracy*", the attack on democracy will be stopped.

It is hard to find a more convincing reason to stand for sustainable development.

Thank you!