

21st OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

“Increasing stability and security: Improving the environmental footprint of energy-related activities in the OSCE region”

Concluding Meeting, 11 – 13 September 2013, Prague

Opening Session, Wednesday, 11 September 2013

Welcoming remarks

Ambassador Lamberto Zannier
OSCE Secretary General

Minister Kohout,
Minister Kozhara,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to join our host and the Ukrainian Chairmanship in welcoming you all to the Concluding Meeting of this year’s OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum. I am very pleased to see so many high-level representatives of the OSCE participating States, Partners for Co-operation, and various international, regional and non-governmental organizations, as well as experts from academia and the private sector.

In the last years, energy security has been high on the OSCE agenda.

In 2010 at the OSCE Astana Summit, Heads of States and Government identified energy security as one of the areas where dialogue among participating States must be enhanced. A number of Ministerial Council decisions, Economic and Environmental Fora, and conferences have addressed this topic.

Since the beginning of 2013, within the framework of the Economic and Environmental Forum, we have focused our deliberations on the impact of energy production and consumption on the environment from a stability and security perspective.

Promoting sustainable development through the green economy has been one of the key concepts highlighted during the preparatory process of the Forum. Indeed, the current economic and environmental challenges the OSCE region and the world as a whole are facing oblige States to increase energy efficiency and look for solutions, based on renewable and environmentally sound technologies.

In this regard, when looking at the sustainable energy aspects of the post-2015 development agenda, we should be conscious and bearing in mind the strengths the OSCE has as the largest regional security organization in the world.

It is in the interest of our Organization to focus its action on those areas where it can bring added value and offer its expertise.

Let me mention three areas, where I believe, the OSCE has proven its strength and which could represent the path of our future action:

- We are a platform for discussion where experts and representatives from national and international organizations can continue to exchange views and share best practices. This particular area offers an opportunity to even more broadly involve private sector, civil society and academia and support regional and sub-regional dialogue on specific energy and environmental issues;
- Because of our comprehensive security mandate, we address the link between energy and environment from a cross-dimensional perspective, which is instrumental in strengthening stability and promoting sustainable energy cooperation and thus contributing to building trust and confidence among participating States;
- The promotion, throughout the whole OSCE region, of transparency, accountability and good governance, also in the field of environmental and energy-related activities should continue to have priority in our agenda.

These are some of the areas where we are involved and where participating States can strengthen their co-operation further. They have a great potential, and it is in meetings like today that we should constantly bear them in mind in order to effectively orientate and focus our endeavours in the economic and environmental dimension.

Energy and environmental issues pose ever growing challenge we all have to face and all relevant stakeholders, including the civil society, have a meaningful role to play in responding to it. It is through the multi-stakeholder and complementary co-operation among governments, international, regional and non-governmental organizations, the business community, academia, development agencies and financial institutions that the goal of reducing the environmental footprint of energy-related activities can eventually be achieved.

I do hope that the deliberations held throughout this year will offer useful food-for-thought to all of us in view of the forthcoming Ministerial Council. Also in light of the recent discussion on developing a strategic approach to the OSCE economic and environmental dimension within the framework of the Helsinki +40 process, promoting energy and environmental dialogue and cooperation should be among core areas where the OSCE and OCEEA in particular could enhance their activities. The confidence building potential of the cooperation in this field should be further explored and deepened. We need to better understand the energy and environmental challenges we are currently facing in the OSCE area and worldwide and how the OSCE can further contribute to addressing them in more efficient manner.

Finally, let me mention that we very much appreciate the co-operation and partnerships we have with a number of international organizations in the energy and environment field. They allow us to synergise our efforts and reinforce our action based on respective mandates and capabilities. Today's Review Session, where our colleagues from the UNECE will present a report, is a good example of such co-operation. Let me welcome all partner organizations which, in the next days, will contribute to our discussions here in Prague.

I look forward to productive discussions and debates that will take place during the next days.