



United States Mission to the OSCE

24th Economic and Environmental Forum “Strengthening stability and security through cooperation on good governance”

Opening Statement – Second Preparatory Meeting

As delivered by Darren Perdue, Political Officer
Berlin, Germany
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Good morning fellow delegates, representatives, and distinguished guests; and a special welcome to those who have joined us from capitals, from other international organizations, from the private sector, and from civil society. On behalf of Ambassador Baer and the United States, I would like to offer our sincere gratitude to Ambassador Eberhard Pohl and the German Chairmanship, Coordinator Dr. Halil Yiğitgüden, and all of your team members for planning this week’s events. We also appreciate the contributions of our expert panelists and OSCE field officers and thank them for their participation.

The United States is pleased to be an active participant in this week’s Connectivity Business Conference and this Second Preparatory Meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum. These two events have brought together civil society, academic experts, government officials, and business representatives to discuss the impact of good governance on the investment climate; the fight against corruption, money-laundering, and terrorism financing; the security of supply chains; and labor migration. Strengthening security in the OSCE region through enhanced economic connectivity and good governance are important priorities. We are encouraged that the German Chairmanship and OSCE Secretariat continue to focus on these topics. And we recognize that this week’s events help deliver on the promise to involve the private sector and business community more closely in the OSCE’s Second Dimension work.

Our first panel debate later today will focus on the impact of good governance on economic development and creation of a positive investment climate. The United States is a strong believer in the power of foreign investment, which has numerous economic benefits. Foreign investment can stimulate growth, create jobs, increase productivity, raise living standards, and provide businesses with first-hand knowledge of broad consumer preferences. Foreign investment can also spark innovation and creativity. We welcome the inclusion of this important topic in the EEF and encourage fellow participating States to actively engage in tackling issues related to legal and regulatory systems, dispute resolution, protection of intellectual property rights, corruption, and transparency. By embracing open, non-discriminatory, predictable, and transparent investment policies, each of us can improve our investment climate, positively impact growth, and increase our economic security.

Efforts to increase economic ties among OSCE participating States, particularly those in the Caucasus and Central Asia, can have a long-lasting positive impact on security and stability across our region. By removing barriers to cross-border cooperation, supporting trade facilitation, and improving customs cooperation, the OSCE and its participating States can foster more sustainable growth. Regional efforts designed to improve economic connections in the Caucasus and Central Asia, such as the New Silk Road initiative and the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program, can be enhanced by OSCE activities in the region. We remain encouraged by the formation of an OSCE informal working group by the countries of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, and Turkmenistan to explore how the Organization can further support regional cooperation. Importantly, we note that this group maintains an open invitation to all OSCE participating States to ensure that its efforts are broad based, inclusive, and promote cooperation, rather than division.

Mr. Chair, the scourge of corruption affects the security of all OSCE participating States by impeding democratic progress, respect for human rights, government accountability, political and social inclusion, and inclusive economic growth. The costs of corruption are enormous, resulting in gross misallocation of resources, economic decay, and slower growth. As Secretary Kerry said during the May 12 Anti-Corruption Summit in London, corruption is as much of an enemy as some of the extremists we're fighting, because it tears at the entire fabric of a society. Corruption drives political instability, erodes trust between citizens and government, cripples the basic functions of state like security and justice, fuels violent extremism, and stifles economic prosperity and human rights. That's why the United States has deepened its commitment to fiscal transparency and the fight against corruption, both in our home country and abroad.

Finally, Mr. Chair, the United States shares concerns previously raised in Economic and Environmental Committee meetings regarding negative perceptions of irregular migrants and labor migration, and the strong need to overcome those perceptions. The economy of the United States benefits tremendously from the contributions of migrant workers, whose direct impact on our GDP is estimated to be as high as 15 percent. Migrants are enterprising, ambitious, talented, and entrepreneurial; and have created some of the world's most innovative and valuable companies. We welcome the attention being placed on this important issue at the OSCE. Simply put, effective, safe, and humane management of labor migration represents an essential aspect of the OSCE's broader response to the migration and refugee crisis.

In closing, let me say that we appreciate the progress that has been made in furthering the OSCE's economic and environmental work, and continue to believe that the Second Dimension provides many more opportunities to strengthen security, build confidence, and restore trust – particularly for a world experiencing economic hardships, social turmoil, climate change, and an historic global migration and refugee crisis.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.