



United States Mission to the OSCE

Closing Statement at the 29th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum in Prague

As prepared for delivery by Jessica Beck, Political Officer
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I would like to begin by once again thanking the Swedish Chairpersonship and the OCEEA for elevating the issue of women's economic empowerment to the top of the Second Committee's priorities this year. I would also like to thank the moderators, keynote speakers, and panelists who shared their expertise with us during the past two days.

This meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum, as well as the two preparatory meetings earlier this year, addressed specific issues related to the theme of women's economic empowerment in the OSCE region and worldwide. These meetings have clearly illustrated the linkage between women's economic empowerment and our collective peace, prosperity, and security.

As the United States has noted before, I would like to reiterate that the OSCE is overdue for an updated consensus decision on women's economic empowerment. The EEF meetings have provided a platform to discuss this issue in great depth and detail since February and consider new commitments to make further progress. We hope now to advance this effort with other participating States and achieve a consensus decision at the Ministerial in Stockholm in December.

There is no doubt, the devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic on women's economic empowerment hinders our collective ability to recover from the greatest economic downturn since the Great Depression. If left unaddressed, this bleak reality for women and girls will continue to erode and undermine sustainable economic growth and women's advancement. This will only be exacerbated by the mounting negative effects and costs of climate change. We hope a Ministerial decision will reflect participating States' commitment to take tangible steps to invest in care work to build stronger economies; increase women's access to digital technologies and services; and promote their financial inclusion. We should also encourage women's participation and leadership in environmental decision-making and combating climate change.

Damaging inequities for women and girls – that have been exacerbated by the pandemic – have current as well as long-term consequences for all of us. Therefore, it is crucial that all participating States build measures to address these deep disparities into our national and collective responses to the COVID pandemic, economic recovery, and climate change, and continue to promote women's economic empowerment at every opportunity.

To conclude, I would like to thank again the Swedish Chair-in-Office for its hard work and focus on this issue. We look forward to continuing this conversation with the goal of achieving a consensus decision that includes tangible steps we can take to support women's economic empowerment in the OSCE area.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator/Chair.