



United States Mission to the OSCE

Closing Statement at the 28th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum Preparatory Meeting

As prepared for delivery by Lane Darnell Bahl,
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I would like to begin by once again thanking the Albanian Chairmanship, the Coordinator and his team at the OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities Office for bringing the battle against corruption to the top of the Second Committee's priorities. I would also like to thank Special Representative on Combating Corruption Paola Severino for joining us for this concluding session.

The panelists addressed a struggle that is shared across the region. Several illustrated the range of new tools and technologies we can use to fight back and others identified new threats we need to address. We hope that what we learned this week will lead to more substantive conversations in the months ahead.

These conversations addressed issues central to the OSCE's Second Dimension and its impact on regional security. Beyond the OSCE commitments specifically on corruption and good governance, corruption is relevant to many – perhaps even most – Second Dimension commitments. Based on this week's discussions, we encourage the Albanian Chairmanship and delegations to focus on a few areas.

First, it is time for participating States to update our commitments on fighting corruption, particularly to reflect how new technologies enhance our ability to prevent corruption, as well as the need to explicitly explore corruption's links to transnational organized crime. This nexus threatens to hollow out democratic institutions, damage economic participation, and undermine security. Our commitments should not only address governmental efforts to hold corrupt actors accountable, but also emphasize the importance of an open and enabling operating environment for civil society and investigative journalists.

Second, I urge participating States to consider how the OSCE can assist other international actors in the fight against illegal and illicit activities such as wildlife and timber trafficking, illegal mining, and illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing.

I think many – if not ALL of us – joined the *Side Event* to hear the great strides made by the government of Georgia.

It is no surprise that the criminals engaged in trafficking of these resources also deal in human beings, drugs, and arms. We call on the Albanian Chairmanship to heighten the Second Committee's focus on these issues. Many – if not ALL of us – are vulnerable.

Third, the OSCE is overdue for an updated consensus decision on environmental protection, *writ large*. Since the 2007 *Madrid Declaration on Environment and Security*, the world, our governance, and our technologies have changed dramatically. We hope to discuss this further at the *Second Preparatory Meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum in May* in Tirana.

Thank you, once again, for all your hard work and for your focus on complex, yet critical issues in the Second Dimension, particularly for your success in formulating gender-balanced panels and the inclusion of an exceptional civil society organization in the last panel. We look forward to continuing to engage in the coming months and moving this conversation, and the organization's impact, further.

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