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**TO:
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Opening address Ambassador Eberhard Pohl

First Preparatory Meeting of the 24th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

“Strengthening stability and security through co-operation on good governance”

Vienna, 25 January 2016

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the German Chairmanship it is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the First Preparatory Meeting of the 24th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, dedicated to the topic of “strengthening stability and security through co-operation on good governance”. I warmly welcome the Secretary General, Mr Lamberto Zannier, and the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, Dr Halil Yurdakul Yigitgüden. I would especially like to thank Dr Yigitgüden and his able team for organizing this event.

We are also very grateful to our keynote speakers for today: Prof. Klaus Töpfer, who has held several high-level positions in international environmental policy, including Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, and Dr Helge Wendenburg, who currently serves as Director General for Water Management and Resource Conservation at Germany’s Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety. Thank you both for coming here today and for setting the scene for our discussions in the next two days.

Finally, I would like to warmly welcome all participants – representatives of the OSCE participating States and the Partners for Co-operation, officials from ministries and agencies, representatives of international, regional and non-governmental organizations, members of academia and the business sector, and last but not least the economic and environmental officers from the OSCE field operations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Why did we choose “Good Governance” as our overall theme for the Economic and Environmental Forum cycle?

The answer is that good governance plays a critical role both for economic growth and for stability and security in the OSCE region, and it has major transboundary impacts. In a globalized world, in a globalized economy, there is a pressing need for joint answers to global challenges. Promoting good governance in all its manifestations – including by ensuring the rule of law, strengthening the accountability of the public sector and improving the quality of environmental legislation – is the right response to the global challenge of ensuring sound framework conditions for sustainable economic development. The OSCE, with its

comprehensive approach to security, can contribute to these endeavours and serve as a valuable platform for dialogue.

In this year's Economic and Environmental Forum, we want to build on already existing OSCE commitments on good governance – such as the 2003 Maastricht Strategy and the 2012 Dublin Declaration – and foster cooperation in this field. This First Preparatory Meeting will focus on good environmental governance as a means of enabling sustainable economic development. Today and tomorrow we will address various topics of environmental governance such as resource efficiency, environmental legislation, transparency and stakeholder participation. During the Second Preparatory Meeting, which will take place in Berlin on the 19th and 20th of May, we will discuss the importance of good governance for business interaction, better investment conditions and the fight against corruption as well as economic aspects of migration.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we all know, we have only limited natural resources on our planet. In a globalized, interconnected world, we depend on each other in sharing these resources. Hence, we need to cooperate on using natural resources efficiently and tackling environmental challenges. Improving environmental governance, both nationally and internationally, is of crucial importance to making our economies more efficient, more resilient and more sustainable. The OSCE and its Second Dimension can contribute substantially to this important task.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Economic and Environmental Dimension of the OSCE has an important role to play when it comes to renewing dialogue and rebuilding trust among participating States. We can – and we should – draw on its potential to a higher degree. Therefore, it is the intention of the German Chairmanship to strengthen the Second Dimension, and to make it more relevant. One important way to achieve this is by involving the private sector and by inviting more companies and business associations to the Economic and Environmental Forum and to our monthly sessions of the Economic and Environmental Committee.

The Business Conference on Economic Connectivity in the OSCE area, which the German Chairmanship is holding in Berlin on the 18th and 19th of May, is also aimed at the increased involvement of the private sector. The main objective of this business conference is to initiate a meaningful dialogue about framework conditions for economic activity in the OSCE area. We are convinced that enhancing connectivity and promoting greater economic interaction can contribute substantially to renewing dialogue and rebuilding trust among participating States.

In concluding, I would like to thank all of you in advance for actively participating in this year's Forum cycle and for sharing your views and best practices. I look forward to a lively discussion and to the active involvement of all delegations.

Thank you very much for your attention.