



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

# **24<sup>th</sup> Economic and Environmental Forum “Strengthening stability and security through cooperation on good governance”**

## **Closing Statement – First Preparatory Meeting**

As delivered by Darren Perdue, Political Officer  
Vienna, Austria, January 26, 2016

Good afternoon fellow delegates, representatives, and distinguished guests, including those who have joined us from capitals, from other international organizations, from the private sector, and from civil society. I would like to start by thanking you, Madam Chair and the German Chairmanship, Coordinator Dr. Halil Yiğitgüden, and your team members for all of your hard work coordinating this week’s First Preparatory Meeting of the OSCE’s Economic and Environmental Forum. We also appreciate the active participation of our expert panelists and OSCE field officers and thank them for their meaningful contributions.

During this week’s Preparatory Meeting, we heard from many technical experts and policymakers, NGOs, businesses, and other organizations about the importance of good environmental governance and its effect on stability and security. Effective legislation, sustainable development policies, the importance of public participation, the exchange of best practices, transparency and access to information, and resource efficiency were explored in-depth. Throughout our discussions, one thing became clear. Whether addressing externalities, setting and enforcing targets, or developing fair and transparent ways to incentivize environmentally responsible behavior, the rule of law and good governance remain at the core of getting this right.

In addition to discussing high level structures, frameworks, and multilateral agreements, we also learned about very practical steps that can be taken to help us move toward better cooperation. Ethan Shenkman, Deputy Counsel of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, shared details about U.S. participation in the Global Lead Paint Initiative. The implementation of this initiative, which has the potential to dramatically reduce harmful levels of lead in paint by the year 2020, could be an opportunity for Aarhus Centres and OSCE field missions by working with host countries to adopt national legislation and raise public awareness.

We are also excited about the opportunities shared by Raffi Balian, Director of the U.S. Regional Environmental, Science, Technology, and Health Hub in Budapest, to launch the Sava River Water Council and to help local Ukrainian communities with environmental

planning and hazardous waste management. These are tangible initiatives with real impact, and we'd like to explore how Aarhus Centers and OSCE field missions could play a role.

Throughout 2016, the United States will actively support efforts to address important Second Dimension issues. Environmental governance; improving the investment climate by fighting corruption, money-laundering, and the financing of terrorism; and the OSCE's response to the migration and refugee crisis are critical issues that demand our best thinking. We look forward to the challenge and to working closely with all of you.

In closing, we again thank the German Chairmanship and all of the organizers of this week's First Preparatory Meeting.

Thank you, Madam Chair.