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**STATEMENT BY
THE PERMANENT DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS
TO THE OSCE AT THE FIRST PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE
25th OSCE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM**

Vienna, 23 January 2017

Opening session

Mr. Chairperson,

First of all, I should like to thank all of the distinguished speakers and rapporteurs for their detailed statements, which set the necessary tone for the work of this anniversary preparatory meeting.

Over the last quarter of a century, the Economic and Environmental Forum has become a key event in the OSCE's second basket and represents an important format for the development of dialogue and co-operation between participating States on the most pressing economic and environmental security issues.

In our opinion, the choice of greening the economy and building partnerships for security as the overall theme this year offers a broad framework for discussion of vital problems such as improving energy efficiency and using renewable energy sources, strengthening partnership between government and business, supporting innovation and entrepreneurship, and job creation.

The decision adopted at the Ministerial Council meeting in Hamburg last December on strengthening good governance and promoting connectivity offers additional possibilities for stepping up the OSCE's activities in the second basket, particularly the economic sector.

We fully agree with the approach by the Austrian Chairmanship regarding the need to deal with the growing economic fragmentation in the OSCE area and to build bridges between East and West. We have spoken about this over the course of recent years in our Organization. The delegation of Belarus in particular has consistently called for the building of a fair, predictable and reliable economic and commercial architecture in Europe and the Euro-Atlantic space as a whole, taking account of the interests of all participating States, operating on a solid legal basis in relations between countries and integration associations, and seeking to overcome differences by peaceful means.

The OSCE platform could be used to establish dialogue between different economic integration associations. In that connection, we are pleased to see representatives of the Eurasian Economic Commission, European Commission and other international organizations in this room. We also welcome the initiative by Austria of holding a seminar in May on the creation of a common economic space from Vancouver to Vladivostok and a corresponding expert workshop in October.

For our part, we are looking to advance the subject of connectivity in the widest sense of the term during our Presidency of the Central European Initiative this year, which has “Connectivity in a Wider Europe” as its motto.

Belarus is interested in further strengthening the OSCE’s second basket and increasing its visibility among the other dimensions of security. We are willing to take an active part in the work in this area and to share our knowledge and experience. A delegation from the Office of the Prosecutor General of Belarus headed by the Deputy Prosecutor General is taking part in this meeting and will present our national experience in combating corruption.

In conclusion, we should like to wish all participants in the meeting a fruitful and productive discussion and hope that the work of this meeting will help to further strengthen mutual understanding, confidence and co-operation in the OSCE area.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.