



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

25th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

**“Greening the Economy and Building Partnerships for Security
in the OSCE Region”**

Prague, 6-8 September 2017

Concluding Remarks

Secretary General Thomas Greminger

Mr. Chairman,

Dear Colleagues,

It is a great pleasure to be back in Prague.

I was very pleased to listen to at least parts of the last very lively and substantial panel discussion on connectivity. It confirmed my assumption that the issue of connectivity is very topical, in particular for the OSCE and should be kept high on our agenda.

Mr. Chairman,

I appreciate the opportunity to address this concluding session of the Economic and Environmental Forum, and I thank the Austrian Chairmanship for choosing a highly relevant theme for its 25th anniversary. “Greening the economy” is a challenge that is very closely linked to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, and our engagement demonstrates the contribution that regional security organizations can make to support its implementation.

We all recognize that achieving sustainable development requires harmonization of economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. These interconnected elements are critical to the well-being of individuals and societies, and ultimately to security, as explicitly recognized by the 2030 Agenda. And I could not agree more with underlining that “there cannot be development without security and no security without development”.

The Economic and Environmental Forum process, the Prague process, is an excellent example of the role the OSCE can play in addressing urgent issues of great complexity. Indeed, our efforts are fully in line with the 2030 Agenda’s call for promoting peace, prosperity and partnerships. This year, the Forum process has shown that the transition to a green economy and ensuring economic and social development are complex and challenging endeavours that can only be achieved through co-operation, co-ordination, long-term commitment and mutual support by all relevant actors. The OSCE has extensive experience building partnerships, and we will continue to create coalitions to generate synergies and enhance impact.

Mr. Chairman,

The Forum process’s focus this year on some key aspects of sustainable development, including the role of economic development and connectivity in promoting economic participation, is very timely.

Deepening economic disparities, weak governance and rule of law, corruption and growing unemployment can pose security risks. They might even fuel radicalization and violent extremism that lead to terrorism. Responding effectively to these challenges requires a comprehensive and cross-

dimensional approach, with renewed efforts to re-create a climate of confidence, which is essential to economic development. In particular, strong institutions and increased access to economic opportunities and education, particularly for vulnerable groups, are needed. So we need to join forces to craft inclusive policies and implement practices that can improve the lives of our citizens, especially the many who have been left behind by the advances of globalization.

Sustainable development cannot be achieved without taking into account environmental considerations. The 2016 Batumi Declaration, “Greener, cleaner, smarter!”, adopted at the Eighth “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference, represents a major step forward toward greening economies in our region. This year, the Austrian Chairmanship has put a strong focus on the reduction of environmental risks – including environmental degradation, unsustainable use of natural resources, mismanagement of waste, resource scarcity, pollution, and natural hazards – which endanger people in our region and pose serious challenges to policy-makers.

The effects of climate change add to the complexity and severity of these risks. This is why good environmental governance is so important. The OSCE has long been engaged in fostering transparency, facilitating access to environmental information and promoting dialogue among stakeholders to build trust and enable co-operation. The Forum, as well as the review report prepared under the guidance of the UNECE, has made valuable recommendations on how the OSCE could reinforce its response to environment and security challenges: we stand ready, with the support of the participating States, to work towards their implementation.

Mr. Chairman,

The OSCE family must continue to work together to develop a common vision for our future in which economic and environmental activities can fully realize their vast potential for building trust and confidence among participating States. So we should continue to build upon existing OSCE commitments and streamline our engagement to consolidate and improve our effectiveness in these areas.

The discussions in the framework of the Session “The Way to Vienna”, has shown a large support for the Chairmanship’s intention to work towards consensus on two Ministerial Council decisions on promoting economic participation, and on environmental co-operation and greening economies. We, as Secretariat, stand ready to provide all our expertise to the Chairmanship and delegations towards a successful outcome at the Ministerial.

I would also like to express the Secretariat’s full support for the incoming Italian Chairmanship: we look forward to co-operating with you in the Forum throughout 2018 on the timely issue of “bridging the inequality gap”.

Finally, let me thank our speakers and moderators for their excellent contribution over the past three days; the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its traditionally excellent hospitality; the Austrian Chairmanship for its steadfast support; and the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, the OSCE Documentation Center, and Conference Services staff and interpreters for all their hard work in organizing this impressive event.

Thank you.