



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

**24<sup>th</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum**

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

**FIRST PREPARATORY MEETING**

**Vienna, 25 - 26 January 2016**

OSCE Congress Centre, Hofburg, Heldenplatz, 1010 Vienna

**Closing Statement**

**by Dr. Halil Yurdakul Yigitguden**

**Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities**

Dear Ambassadors,  
Dear Participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In concluding the First Preparatory Meeting of the 24<sup>th</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum on “Strengthening stability and security through co-operation on good governance”, please allow me to express my gratitude for all the outstanding presentations, the vivid examples, the constructive discussions, and all the ideas put forward over the last two days. This meeting once again showed the virtue of the OSCE as a unique platform to bring very different stakeholders together and connecting them in an active dialogue.

The theme of this year’s Forum proves to meet the joint interest of all 57 participating States of the Organization, by connecting foreign and security communities with the business community and international and non-governmental actors in our joint endeavor for sustainable development. This first meeting focused in particular on environmental good governance and its importance for sustainable development, a healthy investment climate and stability and peace.

Let me come back to the very beginning of our event and the thought-provoking keynote speech of Prof. Klaus Töpfer. He took us on a journey through the sometimes difficult relationship of economy and environment, starting in 1972. The perceived contradictions between both were overcome with the concept of sustainable development, which balances economic, environmental and social concerns and interests. I would like to recall two main messages that I consider particularly relevant for us:

First, Prof. Toepfer urged that we must find new and better ways to counter the externalization of costs that stem from the exploitation of natural resources, within societies but also among world regions. Shifting the burden of resource exploitation on others has always been a source of tensions and conflict, and we should aim to prevent this.

Second, he concluded that sustainable development is the new name for peace – a statement that fully reflects the OSCE approach as laid down in the Maastricht Strategy Document.

In this respect, he saw the OSCE and its participating States in a strong and responsible position to signal that the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals are reflected in real action.

Similar thoughts were raised by Mr Wendenburg in his keynote statement, who pointed in particular to the risks of climate change and the crucial role of resource efficiency for a sustainable economy.

Let me now briefly summarize some insights from the individual sessions.

In the **first session**, we discussed the linkages between good environmental governance, economic development and competitiveness, and security. Speakers stressed that good environmental governance generates a more secure environment for all and contributes to a sustainable investment climate and competitiveness. It was also pointed out that achieving good environmental governance, investment and competitiveness requires stable regulatory framework, appropriate institutional architecture, new economic instruments, public-private partnerships and reinforced co-ordination and co-operation among the countries - an area where the OSCE could make a significant contribution. Another issue addressed was the involvement of the wide range of stakeholders, including civil society and businesses. Civil Society Organizations are important stakeholders that can promote local ownership of the transition process towards well-governed, sustainable and inclusive economies.

The **second session** focused on environmental legislation and its impact on business and investment. Good governance, the rule of law and multilateral approaches are important elements in the context of enabling a favourable investment climate and business environment. The presentations showed that environmental protection does not necessarily mean a threat to economic growth, but is indeed a business opportunity. We heard that there is a need to extend international environmental co-operation, including business activities in the area of addressing waste-related challenges and exchange of best practices in using green technologies.

In the **third session**, we heard various examples how transparency, access to information, and stakeholder participation can be successfully enhanced. The presentations showed that involving the public in environmental decision-making is a win-win situation for both the public as well as the decision-makers: on the one hand, democracy is ensured and citizens are empowered. On the other hand, the participation of the public in the political decision-making increases ownership and eases implementation. However, there is a need to promote and explain the benefit of participation also to the citizens and plan the overall participation process carefully. We also heard a practical example of the work of the Aarhus Centres in bringing different stakeholders together for the promotion of green economy which could be replicated. Among the suggestions to the OSCE were to contribute to key pan-European processes and to the implementation of existing international legislation.

This morning, we started with **session four** on good environmental governance in the raw materials sector. The speakers presented several good practices on sound, transparent and environmentally friendly management of mineral resources, which showed how it can contribute to prevent tensions and ensure benefit for the whole society. It became also clear that stakeholder awareness, participation and partnership are crucial for ensuring good environmental governance in the raw materials sector. Speakers proposed that the OSCE could help to expand national best practices on mining issues to regional approaches, based

on international standards. Based on its current work, the OSCE could also enhance its activities on community awareness and participation.

**Session five** focused on resource efficiency and green technologies as instruments for sustainable development. The presentations showed that they not only contribute to sustainable development but also bring significant benefits for business and society; they can be considered a win-win approach. Resource efficiency is not only an environmental goal, but rather a process that decreases economic costs and risks for companies and thus makes them more competitive. The speakers also pointed out that green technologies, innovations and resource efficiency are crucial for addressing climate change challenges and implementing the commitments under the Paris Agreement.

Finally, our **last session** was devoted to sound waste management frameworks in the context of good environmental governance. It reminded us that hazardous waste and chemicals have serious safety and security implications for the OSCE participating States at local, national and transboundary levels.

Environmentally sound management of waste and hazardous chemicals has multiple benefits of for government, business, civil society and communities. We heard several good examples in this session. The OSCE has accumulated experience in supporting its participating States in this field, particularly through the ENVSEC Initiative. Such activities have the potential for expansion and replication.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This brief overview included just the main suggestions and recommendations from the experts and the participants about the possible areas where the OSCE could provide its support and where it could increase its engagement in good environmental governance. It is our responsibility to closely consider all recommendations raised during the last two days and integrate them in the further discussions throughout the Forum process.

Moreover, my Office, with the support of the participating States and the field operations, will build upon these suggestions to continue to promote environmental good governance through concrete project activities. We will in particular increase our efforts to strengthen the connections of Aarhus Centres with the private sector and their involvement in green economy, as was suggested by several speakers.

At the political level, as laid down in several Ministerial Council decisions, we will continue our efforts to promote dialogue and co-operation both among the participating States, as well as among non-governmental organizations, civil society, and the private sector on issues related to environmental good governance and its impacts on stability and security. The discussions at this first preparatory meeting in itself have been a step forward in contributing to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals by the OSCE States.

Thanks to the *rapporteurs*, a Consolidated Summary including the main key suggestions and recommendations made by participants during the deliberations will be compiled by my Office and made available to all of you within the next weeks.

Before passing the floor to Ms. Weil for the Chairmanship's concluding remarks and outlook to the second preparatory meeting, I would like to thank the German Chairmanship, the

Moderators, Speakers and Rapporteurs, the interpreters, the conference service staff, as well as the colleagues from my Office for their joint contribution to the success of this event.

I also want to thank all of you, dear participants, for your active contribution, and to wish you a safe trip back home.