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

Prague, 6 September 2017

**Greening the economy and
building partnerships for security in the OSCE region**

Opening session

Mr. Moderator,

First of all, we should like to thank the Federal Minister of Finance of Austria Hans Jörg Schelling, the deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic Martin Tlapa, the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities Ambassador Vuk Žugić, and also the distinguished speakers for their informative statements.

We also thank our Czech colleagues for their traditional hospitality and the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities for its excellent organization of this year's anniversary meeting.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum (EEF) and the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the position of Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities. These are important landmarks in the life of the Organization, which invite us, on the one hand, to look back to review the distance we have travelled and, on the other hand, to think about future prospects.

A lot has been achieved in the past quarter of a century: the EEF has proved its value as a key event in the OSCE's second basket. The large number of commitments that participating States have undertaken, starting with the Helsinki Final Act and Maastricht OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension and ending with the Hamburg Ministerial Council decision on strengthening good governance and promoting connectivity, enable us to address a wide range of problems directly affecting security and the well-being of citizens in our countries. The current practice of devoting the Forum every year to specific topics is justified, as it allows in-depth rather than thinly spread consideration of the most pressing aspects of economic and environmental security in the OSCE area. In that context, we believe it important to ensure a certain thematic continuity in the work of the Chairmanship. An indispensable role in this process is played by the Office of the

Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, whose work deserves our fullest support.

The economic and environmental dimension is an integral part of the OSCE's concept of comprehensive and co-operative security and plays an important role in strengthening mutual trust, overcoming dividing lines and, ultimately, in creating a genuine security community from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

In that connection, we believe it necessary on the basis of existing experience and achievements to consider what more can be done to strengthen the second basket and to increase its visibility among the other dimensions of security and the benefits of its activities in the interests of the entire OSCE community. Allow me to share a few thoughts on this matter.

First, the integrative function of the economic and environmental dimension should be further enhanced. We could hold more frequent joint meetings of the three committees or special thematic events, like the additional meetings in the third basket, on urgent cross-cutting issues like migration, dealing with natural disasters and protecting critical infrastructures.

Second, there is a need to intensify the OSCE's co-operation with other international organizations in areas of overlapping or parallel competences and to synchronize our work on a global level, particularly with the United Nations. We believe that the theme suggested for this year's Economic and Environmental Forum of developing partnerships is a long-term task and will demand the attention of the next Chairmanships.

For our part, we have done our best to contribute to this process by organizing a high-level discussion on migration in June under the aegis of the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship and the Belarusian Presidency of the Central European Initiative.

Third, greater use should be made of the OSCE's potential in the second basket as a platform for dialogue in accordance with the Platform for Co-operative Security on a wide range of socio-economic and environmental issues, such as economic connectivity and interlinking of integration processes in the European and Eurasian areas. We welcome the invitation extended by the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship to the Eurasian Economic Commission to attend events in the economic cycle this year and hope that this practice will be continued in future.

Mr. Moderator,

Belarus has consistently advocated strengthening the OSCE's second basket as much as possible. We trust that the Concluding Meeting of the 25th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum in Prague will give additional stimulus to co-operation between participating States in this area.

In conclusion, we hope that all participants in this meeting will enjoy useful and fruitful discussions.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.