



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

**“Promoting economic progress and security in the OSCE area  
through innovation, human capital development, and good public  
and corporate governance.”**

**24-25 May 2018**

**Scuola Grande San Giovanni Evangelista  
San Polo 2454, 30125 Venice**

**Closing remarks**

**Ambassador Vuk Žugić  
Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities**

Ambassador Mati,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me thank all representatives of participating States, speakers from academia, the private sector, and our international partner organizations for their contributions to our preparatory meeting.

You have played a central role in the last two days in moving forward and enriching our discussions.

I would also like to thank all participants for grasping the opportunity to discuss the closely inter-linked issues of the digital transformation, human capital development, and good governance. Our discussions have had a very high level and were surely inspired by the historic, beautiful and dignified premises of our meeting.

Colleagues,

In the past two days many ideas have been put forward on how the OSCE could further contribute to respond to the challenges that digitalization and lack of good governance pose to the stability and security of our countries.

First of all, we have discussed the strong connection between good governance, employment opportunities and human capital development.

In this regard, the need for sound corporate governance has been an issue that ran through all our discussions. Good corporate governance plays a crucial role not only in combating corruption, thus contributing to long-term prosperity and stability, but also in providing

education opportunities, including for youth and marginalized groups of the population. As professor Paola Severino has highlighted, the OSCE can serve as a platform not only for exchanging of best national practices but also to boosting public-private partnerships. She, particularly, underlined the inclusiveness of this process and the importance of including the business community and civil society in this endeavor.

Enhancing partnerships with key international organizations would be even more important in an age of digitalization of our economies.

In that context, I would like to repeat a key message by Mr. Quattrocioche, who underlined that building partnerships also among international organizations is key for our success in supporting good governance in the public and private sector in our region, and this is in line with the Secretary General's "Fit for Purpose" reform agenda of the OSCE.

The OSCE could be a platform not only for exchanging best practices, but also for agreeing on a shared perspective on these issues. Our future work in this regard could build on the Hamburg ministerial decision on Strengthening Good Governance and Promoting Connectivity and the decision reached in Vienna on Promoting Economic Participation, among other commitments.

Second, with regard to human capital development we have discussed the key role of early education for the development of soft skills, and the crucial factor of life-long education.

Both education and lifelong learning have been identified as key factor in the success of the labor force to participate in the transforming, increasingly digitalized economy. The positive role of dual-track training and education of the labor force in boosting youth employment has also been discussed. Again, these issues require close coordination and cooperation between public and private sectors.

As a lack of economic perspective can easily turn into a security issue for all of us, the OSCE could well be the place where we discuss different strategies and policies to cope with these issues, in order to identify the right way forward.

Third, with regard to the digital economy we have discussed not only the challenges, but also opportunities. In this regard, right policies are needed to allow companies to profit from existing global networks and foster synergies and cooperation.

Access of SMEs to finance is also an important issue to be addressed to foster the national participation in the global digital economy. On the other hand, digitalization can pose new security threats, as the responsibility and liability of new service providers is often not clearly defined. I believe that the OSCE could be well placed to discuss and identify the main challenges to security that digitalization poses and I would welcome a stronger and continued engagement of the participating States to keep this topic high on the OSCE agenda in the years to come.

I therefore very much welcome the initiative of the Italian Chairmanship to organize ad-hoc meetings on the topic of the digital economy. This will be crucial to identifying the right approach forward for our organization.

In conclusion, let me express my warm thanks to the Italian Chairmanship for hosting us here in this beautiful and historic city and for so perfectly organizing this year's second preparatory meeting.

We felt truly welcome here in Venice.

And let me once again thank all the participants for your valuable contributions. This meeting has been a very good precursor for our further deliberations not only in Prague in September, but also for the discussions that we will have in view of the Ministerial Council in Milan. We hope that many of you will join us and contribute to these endeavours.

Thank you, and I wish you all a safe trip home.