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Statement by Minister Counsellor Ólafur Sigurdsson, Special Envoy for the Sustainable Development Goals, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland, at the Closing Session of the 2nd Preparatory Meeting, of the 30th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, held in Lodz, 23-24th May 2022.

While Iceland fully aligns with the statement delivered by the European Union, in my national capacity, allow me to raise a few key take-aways and issues of relevance for Iceland as this preparatory meeting comes to an end.

We welcome the reports from experts on the multi-dimensional impact Russia's war has had, including on the environment and the pressing security threats of climate change. We also thank the Polish Chairpersonship and OSCE for convening this meeting on important topics related to greening the economy and energy transition to renewable and sustainable means and sources. The topics discussed during the last two days are of great importance for Iceland and we express our gratitude for the inspirational dialogue and the sharing of knowledge.

Mr. Chair

There has never been a clearer case set out for us to seriously develop a common strategy on the use of clean and abundant low temperature geothermal resources available in Europe for house heating.

Iceland has in recent decades achieved 100% transition to renewable energy in house heating and electricity systems. Iceland meets over 65% of its primary energy needs from geothermal sources and over 97% of its heating comes from geothermal energy, making Iceland the world leader in green energy produced per capita. Iceland is grateful to be able to share its expertise for the development of good environmental management and use of renewable energy solutions through the OSCE project on Green Ports and Connectivity, which aims to bring environmental best practices and renewable energy solutions to key Caspian and Black Sea Ports.

Mr. Chair

The impact of the war will continue to undermine global food security, driving up the cost of energy, fertilizers and staple foods in countless nations around the world, the most vulnerable being hit the hardest.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is a harsh reminder of how important it is for Europe to act on her energy security.

Allow me to emphasize the importance of three critical issues that the current crisis has brought forth.

Firstly, the inherent impact on rising global inflation due to rising oil and gas prices, which impacts all our economies.

Secondly, the rise in oil and gas prices, that every household and business in Europe are faced with, which compounds already difficult economic realities we face after two years of the covid pandemic.

Thirdly, the rise in oil and gas prices illustrates once again the importance of expediting our common climate resilience through clean and sustainable energy development by building back better our energy systems.

Russia's war has forced a redirection of efforts and resources that could be focused on strengthening cooperation to reduce carbon emissions and address the existential question of climate change.

Europe's dependence on imported oil and gas from Russia has the potential to impose on our citizens a real energy poverty trap, leaving vulnerable populations without access to warm housing during our cold winter spells, like this winter.

Mr. Chair

We call on international stakeholders to prioritize green solutions in rebuilding Ukraine from the devastation of Russia's war on Ukraine.

Iceland stands ready to cooperate at all levels needed to bring about a much-needed climate resilience in the OSCE region.

Thank you.