



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

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

**“Promoting security, stability and economic growth in the OSCE area by preventing and combating corruption through innovation, increased transparency and digitalization”**

**First Preparatory Meeting**

**Vienna, 17-18 February 2020**

**Concluding Remarks**

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

Special Representative, Professor Severino,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me thank all distinguished representatives of participating States, the academia, the private sector, the moderators and our international partner organizations as well as colleagues from the OSCE Field Operations for participating and contributing to this First Preparatory Meeting of the 28<sup>th</sup> Economic and Environmental Forum. I would like to express my gratitude for all the presentations and the constructive ideas put forward over the last two days.

In particular, I wish to thank the Albanian Chairmanship for the fruitful cooperation, and for giving us the opportunity to reflect on the developments in such interconnected areas as preventing corruption through innovation, increased transparency and digitalization.

You have offered us valuable food-for-thought on how current challenges could be translated into new opportunities for co-operation with the ultimate goal to promote peace and security in our region, preventing and combating corruption and promoting good governance.

Viable partnerships, including public-private partnerships, sharing of best practices, learning from each other are key to success. In this regard, it is important to underline the need for a continued and reinforced dialogue among participating States on how to join efforts to overcome the security challenges brought about by the fight against corruption and how to best use mechanisms offered by new technologies and digitalization in this regard.

Dear colleagues,

Through in-depth discussions in all the thematic sessions, we have gained new insights into how States are responding to the challenges of corruption and technological innovation. We have also learnt that there are many ways in which digitalization can help to improve the security in the OSCE area.

The OSCE places high priority on assisting countries in strengthening their anti-corruption commitments and implementing activities to address these challenges and threats. The promotion of good governance, transparency and the fight against corruption are crucial to the OSCE's mandate in the Economic and Environmental Dimension in building and supporting the organization's comprehensive approach to security. This is done also by fostering good governance, which is essential for achieving 2030 sustainable development agenda, including economic growth, and environmental protection through stakeholder participation, transparency and prevention of corruption.

Even though the Maastricht Strategy highlighted the security risks of the new technologies, acknowledging that – and I quote, “*Globalization, liberalization and technological change offer new opportunities for trade, growth and development, they have not benefited all the participating States equally, thus contributing, in some cases, to deepening economic disparities between and within our countries*”, in this increasingly interconnected setting, these technological challenges require a participatory, inclusive, multi-stakeholder and cross-dimensional approach among governments, civil society, business communities and academia. Therefore, building on last year's efforts, we need to continue to act as a bridge of dialogue among various stakeholders in all our activities to generate greater awareness of technology as a tool for fighting corruption, creating a positive business climate as well as promoting good governance and transparency.

The discussions have shown the great potential of digitalization to promote cooperation, security and growth in the OSCE region. If digital means are well designed and used properly they can help us promote a favorable investment climate and accelerate economic growth, thus creating new business realities which lead to more secure and stable societies.

Furthermore, I would like to emphasize that at the present, in most societies, good governance is closely linked to the effective use of open data and access to public information. In order to enhance the transparency and accountability of public administration, citizens need access to information on decision-making processes as well as on the performance of public administrations. At the same time, open government initiatives promote transparency and accountability in the public sector. The dissemination of open government initiatives and tools is very uneven across the OSCE area that provides a wide scope for learning and sharing of best practices. The participating States have been encouraged to establish open data initiatives and data portals, providing online access to data on everything from national budgets, to school performance, health statistics and aid spending, to name just a few. Through close collaboration with other international organizations working on such initiatives, OSCE is already engaged

on building the capacity and expertise on the use of innovative open data tools and new digital technologies that can enable governments and civil society to implement open data national commitments.

When speaking of digitalization, we cannot leave out some of the challenges that new technologies embody. Governments, experts, organizations are well-aware that the lack of regulation of technologies such as AI, blockchain, cryptocurrencies, can create opportunities that help the illegal economy and organized crime groups easily move funds, incorporate them into the legal economy and increase their profits. Therefore, it is imperative that governments and international organizations work jointly to discuss and influence public policy and regulation in this regard.

Also I would like to emphasize a gender digital gap which has been a trend around the world, including in the OSCE area. The gender digital gap poses a threat to economic, social, and political progress because it restricts the full participation of women in formal economies, equal access to legal and financial institutions, information, access to education, and social interactions. It is essential to work towards reducing and eradicating this gap in our area.

Before concluding, I would like to thank Ms. Irene Charalambides, the OSCE PA Special Representative on Fighting Corruption, for having shared her valuable experience from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. My warm gratitude goes to Professor Severino for her indispensable efforts as Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Corruption.

In conclusion, let me once again thank the Albanian Chairmanship, our colleagues from Conference Services for their invaluable support, and our interpreters for having facilitated our deliberations.

I am convinced that this meeting has been a very good and solid starting point for our further deliberations not only in Prague in September, but also for the discussions that we will have in view of the Second Preparatory Meeting as well as the Ministerial Council in Tirana.

Thank you.