



**OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum
2nd Preparatory Meeting**

Promoting economic progress and security in the OSCE area through energy co-operation, new technologies, good governance and connectivity in the digital era

OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger

Bratislava, 27 May 2019

*Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear colleagues,*

I am very pleased to join State Secretaries František Ružička and Vojtech Ferencz in welcoming our distinguished speakers and participants to the 27th Economic and Environmental Forum. Affordable, secure and sustainable energy is indispensable for growth, prosperity and security in the OSCE region.

Since the 2013 Ministerial Council meeting in Kyiv, two critical challenges have helped to define of our engagement in the field of energy co-operation. One is **protecting critical energy networks**; the other **reducing the environmental footprint** of energy usage, production and transport.

Today, renewables account for a growing part of the energy mix in OSCE participating States. And new digital technologies like the blockchain and big data will soon allow us to further scale up renewable energy, decentralise production and promote new forms of energy trading. The often-evoked **energy transition** is actually happening and picking up speed.

Like any major transition, the energy world of tomorrow offers opportunities but also many challenges.

Electric vehicles will greatly help to reduce harmful emissions and create cleaner air for our citizens. And green growth can be a motor for job creation and economic prosperity.

At the same time, integrating renewable energy into the energy mix without threatening system stability remains a major challenge. Renewable energy and e-mobility also create new dependencies on scarce raw materials such as lithium and cobalt, raising questions of sustainability.

Energy networks are also increasingly digitalized and interconnected, creating new vulnerabilities. Cascade effects can potentially expose our countries and citizens to multiple security risks and serious disruptions.

Policy-makers across the OSCE region are contemplating these risks as they review national energy policies to keep pace with an accelerating energy transition. On account of the growing interdependence between our countries and the impact of energy security on political and economic stability, supporting each other should be in our common interest.

In June, we will launch a new project together with Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan. It is titled “**Green Ports** and Connectivity in the Caspian Sea Region”. It will provide expert support to integrate renewable energy into port operations and make full use of digitalization to enhance sustainable connectivity.

I am confident that this project will effectively demonstrate the positive contribution the OSCE can make in strengthening co-operation between participating States and building effective public-private partnerships.

Now let me turn to the challenge of **protecting critical energy networks**.

Electricity grids in particular are increasingly under threat from natural and man-made disasters. Digital technologies, communication infrastructure, and industrial operations all depend on secure electricity transmission. Risks are on the rise and many OSCE participating States have suffered blackouts and other disruptions on a significant scale.

So, supporting OSCE participating States to improve the resilience of their critical infrastructure is timely. It is even more so, in light of the massive increase in the number of successful cyber-attacks in the energy sector.

The OSCE has been particularly active in this area, developing guidelines and implementing capacity building projects across the region. We are currently setting up a **virtual competency and training centre**. It will strengthen the capacity of energy experts to identify, manage and mitigate risks to critical energy networks. Let me also mention that a special module on gender aspects of energy security will be included into the related training course.

In creating this centre, we are closely co-operating with leading international organizations, the private sector and academic institutions and, not least here in Bratislava with the Slovak University of Technology.

I strongly believe that **inter-institutional cooperation** and an inclusive dialogue across all relevant stakeholders are key prerequisites for a successful energy transition. So, I am pleased that the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Energy Charter Secretariat and several leading private sector companies are actively contributing to today’s

meeting. In particular, I look forward to Ambassador Olga Algayerova's keynote speech. Discussions today and tomorrow will certainly provide plenty of food for thought on how, together, we can better support the transition to a more inclusive, sustainable and secure energy future.

Speaking of partnerships and sustainability, I take this opportunity to draw your attention to the **OSCE Security Days** event next week, 4 June. The event will assess the OSCE's contribution to the Sustainable Development Agenda across all three OSCE dimensions. One significant focus will be on Goal 13 and the link between climate and security and I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Thank you.