



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU statement for the session "The way to Bratislava"

We thank the Slovak chairmanship for the food-for-thought paper and its timely distribution. It contains a number of important aspects that would potentially add value to the mandates of our organisation in the economic and environmental dimension.

With regard to the Chairmanship's intention to negotiate a *Draft Ministerial Council Decision on the security implications of the digital transformation and emerging technologies*, we believe that such text could well complement the debate initiated last year by the Italian Chairmanship which have resulted in the adoption of a Ministerial Council Declaration on the digital economy as a driver for promoting cooperation, security and growth. An additional text related to digitalisation is expected to bring a clear added value to existing commitments.

Emerging digital technologies such as the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, and Big Data, will create new challenges, such as privacy issues, with possible security implications. At the same time, the EU believes that, if well managed, the digital transformation bares high potential for improving social inclusion and sustainable economic progress. In this regard, the EU is committed to make sure that everybody can contribute to, actively participate in and benefit from the digital economy and society and therefore appreciates that these aspects have been included in the Chairmanship's FFT.

Concerning the Chairmanship's decision to negotiate a *Ministerial Council decision on energy co-operation to increase energy security and sustainability*, the EU believes that this text would be a very timely complement to our existing commitments in the area of energy security. Things have changed dramatically since the last Ministerial Council Decision devoted to energy security was approved. The current political, economic and environmental circumstances oblige us to get back on track and reassess the role of the OSCE in light of the increased digitization of the energy sector and in respect of the growing impact of climate change on energy security.

As energy is closely linked to economy efficiency and environmental sustainability, in working on such text, we would like to see relevant space devoted to the role that the OSCE could play in fostering a more inclusive and sustainable economic growth. The text should also highlight the implications of the digitalization on the resilience of our critical energy infrastructures. Finally, this text should contain an important part devoted to environmental aspects of energy co-operation. The text should also take into account to the need to find a cost-efficient and universal solution to the question of storing renewable energy, which is the key to maximising its contribution to the energy mix, to improving energy security and achieving a substantial reduction of CO2 emissions.

Furthermore, as the EU strongly believes that the energy transition can provide a major boost for jobs and growth, we also expect such text to focus on the importance of public-private partnerships and the crucial role they can play in making the energy transition towards a more safe, sustainable and socially acceptable energy future which is more inclusive and prosperous in order to reach the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Finally, the EU calls the chairmanship to guarantee a balance between economic and environmental aspects of the second dimension and propose a draft decision on environmental issues to be submitted to the participating states at the ministerial council. Negotiations on combating transnational organised crime which damages the environment should be pursued.

In conclusion, the EU stands ready to constructively engage in discussions and negotiations on the two draft deliverables in the coming months and at the Ministerial Council in Bratislava.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA*, and ALBANIA*, the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as MOLDOVA, GEORGIA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

*The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Albania, continue to be part of the Stabilization and Association Process.