



## EUROPEAN UNION

# 28<sup>th</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum Prague, 10 – 11 September 2020

## EU Opening Statement

Excellencies, Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen, The European Union and its member States are pleased to participate in the concluding meeting of the 28th Economic and Environmental Forum. We would like to thank the Albanian Chairmanship and the OSCE Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities and his team for organising this meeting in the midst of challenging circumstances.

Our appreciation also extends to the Government of the Czech Republic for hosting this Forum. We appreciate the flexible arrangement that allows a broad list of speakers and participants to benefit from the exchanges over the next two days.

We also thank the speakers for their introductory remarks that stressed the importance of continuing our dialogue on the topic of corruption from a broad perspective and gave us a glimpse of the upcoming discussions.

This year's Economic and Environmental Forum focusing on "*Promoting security, stability and economic growth in the OSCE area by preventing and combating corruption through innovation, increased transparency and digitalization*" is a valuable opportunity to further deepen and broaden our work on this important issue.

The preparatory meetings leading to this forum tackled many relevant topics such as - the potential of digital technologies in preventing corruption, the significance of asset declarations and open data, the transparent public procurement and good governance. We discussed the scale of the negative impacts of corruption leading to trafficking and mismanagement of natural resources and wildlife. Our exchange, above all, amplified the urgency of tackling this issue. Our dialogue also highlighted

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the essential role of law enforcement bodies, the judiciary, civil society, investigative journalism and media as well as the involvement of the private sector.

Furthermore, we believe that including more speakers from civil society, media and private sector would undoubtedly add value and enrich our discussions in the Economic and Environmental Forum, as well as the other dialogues within framework of second dimension, as they are the key actors in successfully combatting corruption.

We thank the Chairmanship for their concept paper on Possible Ministerial Council Deliverables in the Economic and Environmental Dimension on “*Preventing and Combating Corruption through Digitalization and Increased Transparency*” as well as on “*Protection of the Environment and the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources*”.

Both of the broader selected topical frameworks are timely and extremely relevant for the security of the OSCE participating States. Digital technologies have proven to be extremely useful tools for combatting corruption and increasing transparency. However, we need to keep in mind that there is no one-size-fits-all solution.

We cannot agree more, and reaffirm that protection of the environment, sustainable management of natural resources and preventing illegal activities that damage the environment, including trafficking of wildlife and natural resources, are pressing issues that require our attention.

We believe that the OSCE is well-placed to facilitate the exchange of best practices and to stimulate further enhancement regarding these two extremely relevant areas.

In conclusion, we would like to express our continuous support to the Albanian Chairmanship. We are looking forward to the fruitful discussions here in Prague and stand ready to engage constructively in our work leading up to the Ministerial Council in Tirana.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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