



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

21ST OSCE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

**“Increasing stability and security: Improving the environmental footprint
of energy-related activities in the OSCE region”**

FIRST PREPARATORY MEETING

**Environmental challenges and opportunities stemming from energy-related
activities and their security implications in the OSCE Region**

Vienna, 4-5 February 2012

Welcoming Address

**Mr. Yurdakul Yigitgüden
Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities**

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants,

It is an honor to address this opening session of the First Preparatory Meeting of the 21st OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, especially given that this Meeting is my first official event as the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities. I look forward to working with the Ukrainian Chairmanship and the delegations on the Forum as well as on all other second dimension issues this year.

I am pleased to welcome so many government officials and experts from OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation, representatives of international and regional organizations, the civil society, the business community and academia. By bringing together for this meeting leading experts, the OSCE is fulfilling its mandate as a platform for dialogue and exchange of ideas with regard to energy issues. We are continually deepening our relations with partner organizations, and as you can see, many of them are represented here in Vienna this week.

I take this broad participation as a sign of acknowledgement of what the OSCE has to offer in the economic and environmental dimension, in particular in the field of energy and its footprint upon the environment.

In our discussion during the next two days, we shall identify examples of successful co-operation and share best practices on topics such as effective policies for sustainable energy and energy efficiency, Climate change concerns, a drastic increase in the use of energy over the last decades and the environmental impact of the use of conventional energy sources. These are among the most challenging and pressing issues that need to be addressed at global, regional, national and local level. Environmental good governance and transparency in the energy sector, as well as the protection of critical energy infrastructure, are an important part of the Forum agenda.

This year's Forum is the logical continuation of an on-going dialogue on energy issues in the OSCE framework. Sustainable Energy was discussed during the Forum of the Lithuanian Chairmanship in 2011. In recent years, we have conducted and co-organized meetings and conferences on "Strengthening Energy Security in the OSCE Area" (in July 2009 in Bratislava), "Strengthening Regional Co-operation in Central Asia for Promoting Stable and Reliable Energy within Eurasia" (in May 2010 in Ashgabat), "Assessing the OSCE's Future Contribution to International Energy Security Co-operation" (in September 2010 in Vilnius), and the Chairmanship Conference "Integrating Global Energy Markets – Providing Energy Security" (in November 2011 in Ashgabat).

Based on the existing experience accumulated by my Office and the Field operations, we will continue to provide support to dialogue and co-operation initiatives between various stakeholders at national, bilateral and regional level, notably on renewable energy, energy

efficiency and technology transfer.. We could raise awareness on the environmental footprint of energy-related activities and its impact, particularly at local level, including gender aspects, and support innovative solutions. We could also encourage the inclusion of good governance and anti-corruption aspects in policies promoting sustainable energy and environmental management. In this regard, OSCE-supported Aarhus Centers are well positioned to promote the shared responsibility between governments and the public for all issues concerning environmental governance including challenges stemming from energy-related activities. The Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) where the OSCE cooperates with other International Organizations – United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Regional Environmental Center (REC) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as associate partner also offers a unique mechanism to create synergies to jointly address environmental challenges related to the energy sector.

Excellencies,

Sustainable energy, cooperation on energy issues as well as on environment and security are key priorities of the second dimension and thus part of the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security. The increasing importance of sound environmental governance and the very dynamics of the energy sector require a continuous and transparent dialogue. I trust that the discussions that will take place over the coming days will strengthen our dialogue and cooperation in these areas.

Thank you for your attention.