



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Secretary General Lamberto Zannier

Opening Remarks

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 February 2013

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I warmly welcome all of you to Vienna for this First Preparatory Meeting of the 21st OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum. I am pleased to see so many representatives of the OSCE participating States, Partners for Co-operation, and various international, regional and non-governmental organizations, as well as experts from academia and the private sector.

Allow me also to warmly welcome our new Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, Mr. Yurdakul Yigitgüden. In particular, with his long standing experience in the energy sector he can offer a strong contribution to our joint efforts

The event which is beginning today is the first building block of the 2013 Economic and Environmental Forum. The relevance and importance that energy has for the development and security in the OSCE region have been lastly recognised in the OSCE context at the 2010 Astana Summit where Heads of States and Governments agreed that energy security dialogue

in the OSCE, including on agreed principles of our co-operation, must be enhanced. This year's Forum is the continuation of an on-going dialogue on energy issues in the OSCE framework, culminated over the years with the adoption of a number of MC decisions.

In particular, this year's Forum will mainly focus on the impact that energy production, transportation and consumption have on the environment, as well as on the opportunities that an improved environmental footprint of energy will bring to OSCE participating States.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Reducing the environmental impact of energy related activities is one of the challenges faced by the OSCE participating States.

One cannot neglect that the energy is one of the main drivers of economic development. It contributes greatly to the improvement of life's quality of billions of people all around the world. But at the same time energy production, transportation and consumption - which have obvious economic and political implications - can also have severe implications for the environment with long lasting consequences. Climate change is for sure one of the main challenges we are currently facing, but we should not forget that energy-related activities can also negatively impact on ecosystems, on human health, on soil and sea. We have all witnessed the devastating impact of accidents that took place during last years in the oil extraction industry, in the energy production and transportation.

On the other hand, recent years also marked a significant progress in improving the environmental impact of energy-related activities. The current economic and environmental challenges oblige States to look for solutions, based on renewable, efficient and environmentally sound technologies. Technological development is contributing significantly in curbing CO₂ emissions, increasing energy efficiency and reducing pollution from the extractive industry. Water, wind, solar, geothermal, biofuel are offering alternative options with much lesser impact on the environment and opportunities for local energy production.

But addressing the link between energy, environment and security means going beyond the energy and environmental sector. It means tackling economic development, trade, social

issues, climate change, political and security concerns. It also means mainstreaming energy and environment into all relevant policies such as research, development, and foreign affairs.

I believe that the environmental footprint of energy-related activities offers an ample avenue for co-operation among the OSCE participating States. The promotion of renewable energy sources, co-operation on best practices on resource extraction, environmental impact assessment and transparency in the resource sector are among the most effective ways to reduce the adverse environmental impact of energy.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the OSCE includes participating States of the whole energy chain, our Organization is well placed to facilitate the exchange of best practices related to sustainable energy.

Through the efforts of the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities and our field operations, the OSCE has contributed to promote sustainable energy solutions. Specific areas in which the OSCE has responded to participating States requests have included oil spill preparedness, sharing of best practices in the use of renewable sources of energy, capacity building for policy makers and other national stakeholders, and raising public awareness and public participation on issues at the interface of energy and environment.

In carrying out its work in this area, the OSCE has worked in partnership with other international and regional organizations, focussing on its comparative advantages. In that regard, we have deepened our co-operation with other international bodies, in particular in the framework of the “Vienna Energy Club”.

The OSCE has also a fruitful co-operation with the UNECE, with which we have a Memorandum of Understanding, as well as with the Energy Charter Secretariat, NATO and the Secretariat of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). I would also like to underline the Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative through which we have been cooperating with a number of important partners to address environment and security

challenges in the OSCE region. Within its last ten years, ENVSEC has dealt with several issues related to energy, environment and security.

I believe that throughout this year's Forum process, particular attention will be paid to identifying opportunities to increase the effectiveness of such international co-operation. But I am also confident that the recommendations and outcomes of this year's Forum will strengthen the mandate of the OSCE to support relevant multilateral environmental agreements to the benefit of all participating States.

In conclusion, I wish to express my gratitude to all the guest speakers and participants for joining us here in Vienna and for agreeing to take an active part in our deliberations. I look forward to our discussions over the next two days, and especially to practical suggestions that may enhance the OSCE's role in this important area.