



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

26th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

“Promoting economic progress and security in the OSCE area through innovation, human capital development, and good public and corporate governance”

CONCLUDING MEETING

Prague, 7 September 2018
Czernin Palace, Prague

Concluding Session

Secretary General Thomas Greminger

*Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear colleagues,*

The digital revolution is gathering speed, with far-reaching effects on how we work, live and interact with each other. So it is essential that we consider the security implications of this transformation, and determine how the OSCE can contribute to managing this critical phase in human development. I thank the Italian Chairmanship for encouraging this important discussion.

We have heard many examples of how digitalization is playing out; how it is changing traditional business models; and how it might affect the balance of power within national economies and across borders.

Over the past two decades, the uneven benefits of technological change, globalization, and liberalization have become the focus of increasing debate. In 2003, the OSCE’s Maastricht Strategy recognised the risks related to “deepening economic disparities between and within countries”.

But we are only now beginning to realise the magnitude of the impending challenge. We have seen an acceleration of inequalities and an intensification of associated risks to social stability and security. This is what makes our discussion here in Prague – and beyond – so timely.

Today, we are increasingly aware of the impact of technology on labour markets. Progress in automation and artificial intelligence will result in the disappearance of whole categories of jobs. At the same time, the new digital era has been creating new, innovative jobs and will continue to do so.

More and more states are making great digital leaps forward, transforming their economies at a speed unimaginable just a few decades back. At the same time, there is evidence that new digital divides are emerging within our societies and between countries. Balancing the interests of winners and losers in this transformation is a critical challenge.

Allow me to take a minute to highlight two positive developments in the Second Dimension:

First, in the area of good governance, technology is playing a pivotal role in how public services are provided. E-government holds great promise as a tool for ridding our institutions of corruption, which remains a serious impediment to human development.

Second, digital technologies have great potential as drivers of connectivity. New opportunities to link our economies and societies are continuously being developed. It is up to us to take advantage of this to promote co-operation and build trust between us.

Dear colleagues,

In weighing up the opportunities and challenges, we need to consider how this new technological age is likely to influence security in the OSCE area, and how we can ensure that this profound transformation leads toward a future that reflects our common objectives and values.

I am convinced that we will be best served by embracing technological change as a tool for promoting socio-economic well-being and security. The OSCE can play a constructive role in sharing experiences and developing effective policy responses. Regional approaches can help us to further boost the effectiveness of our action.

As many speakers have argued, investing in human capital development is an important way to tip the balance in our favour. In this respect I want to point out that the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda sets a common path of action for all of us [*inter alia through SDG 4, “Quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all,” and SDG 8, “Decent work for all and sustainable economic growth.”*] As the world’s largest security arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, the OSCE should promote more sustainable economies in which no one is left behind, preventing the exclusion or alienation of potentially large groups of disadvantaged people.

It is, of course, up to our participating States to identify the Organization’s future course of action. But I am convinced that digitalisation, with its implications for security, good governance, economics and the labour market, warrants our sustained attention. So I would welcome efforts by OSCE participating States to constructively engage in discussions on a possible deliverable on this issue for the Ministerial Council in Milan.

The adoption of such a document would represent a strong signal of commitment. It would also demonstrate the OSCE’s readiness and ability to adapt swiftly to new circumstances and challenges. By seeking common responses, we can help seize opportunities for inclusive economic growth and to strengthen our common security.

I would also like to commend the Italian Chairmanship for proposing a ministerial decision on *Human Capital Development*. In view of the intense and fruitful discussions here in Prague, I encourage OSCE participating States to enter relevant negotiations with open minds and to actively contribute to achieving consensus.

Finally, let me join previous speakers in thanking the Chairmanship, the Czech Foreign Ministry, the OSCE Documentation Centre in Prague, and the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities and his Office for organising this important meeting.

Thank you.