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**Opening Remarks by František Ružička, State Secretary,
Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovakia**

“Promoting economic progress and security in the OSCE area through energy co-operation, new technologies, good governance and connectivity in the digital era”

**Second Preparatory Meeting, 27th OSCE Economic and Environmental
Forum**

Bratislava, 27-28 May 2019

Excellencies, Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to welcome you all to the Second Preparatory Meeting of the 27th Economic and Environmental Forum. This meeting is dedicated to “Promoting economic progress and security in the OSCE area through energy co-operation, new technologies, good governance and connectivity in the digital era”.

Energy security, which is at the core of both the 2030 Agenda and efforts to deal with climate change, is a strong focus of our work this year. As CiO and Minister Lajčák has said “doing energy right” is fundamental to the overall security and prosperity of our people.

The OSCE has been engaged in energy cooperation issues since the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. Its role in energy security issues continues to evolve, but it remains grounded in the strong link between the reliability and dependability of energy flows and European security and stability.

This preparatory meeting will focus on 3 issues that are part of the OSCE’s core mandate and central to energy co-operation in the OSCE area.

First, the multilateral cooperation and partnerships that are necessary to ensure a sustainable energy future for all our states.

Energy systems are exposed to a wide range of risks, many of which are beyond the control of any one state or organization.

Cooperation among a variety of stakeholders, including producers, transit countries and consumers is therefore key to building a secure and resilient energy sector.

Constructive energy cooperation will bring positive results for all participating States.

Second, the need to focus on increasing energy efficiency and use of renewable energy resources.

Sustainable development cannot be achieved without due consideration for our environment and the protection of our natural resources.

There are 2 big problems with traditional energy resources such as crude oil and coal: their supply is limited and they have a heavy environmental footprint. In order to meet the world's steadily growing demand for energy, we need to shift to renewable sources, intensify efforts to increase energy efficiency and in the meantime invent technologies for more sustainable use of fossil fuels.

Going "green" can do more than protect the environment. Climate change adaptation and mitigation offers strong medium - and long-term benefits in terms of increased employment, productivity, economic activity and well-being. According to the International Labour Organization, changes in energy production and consumption needed to achieve the 2°C goal could create around 18 million jobs worldwide.

This energy transition can also increase regional connectivity. The OSCE is already working on regional initiatives and projects on energy transformation that have the added benefit of increasing cooperation and trust between states. Energy connectivity means improved trade relations, more prosperity and increased security.

Third, the need to protect energy networks.

As our economies and systems become ever more interconnected, the importance of protecting critical energy infrastructure cannot be underestimated. Recent examples of accidents caused by natural disasters and man-made mistakes in the energy sector clearly indicate that the scale of damage and long-term consequences go far beyond national borders.

The exposure of critical energy infrastructure, including electricity networks, to natural hazards represents a potential threat to energy security. This risk is particularly critical for infrastructure in or around seismic zones, coastlines and other disaster-vulnerable sites. Extreme weather conditions, such as storms and floods, whose impacts are predicted to increase in frequency and intensity due to climate change, further raise the risks.

Slovakia has long advocated for a stronger OSCE focus on protection of critical energy infrastructure against natural disasters and man-made mistakes. As Chairmanship, we are promoting exchange of experience and knowledge as a means to prevent incidents and deal with crisis situations once they occur.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Security and cooperation are not only in the very title of the OSCE, but also at the forefront of its activities. But there is a reason why the second dimension of our organization deals with economic and environmental issues. The reason is very simple, yet important.

There is no prosperity without peace. And there is rarely any peace without prosperity. And when it comes to environment, I don't have to go into detailed arguments - we need to care, we need to be responsible and we need to take the lead - because there is no Planet B.

I am convinced that the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda can help guide our efforts. By reinforcing the nexus between peace, security and development, the 2030 Agenda provides an overarching framework for action with clearly defined goals that are in line also with the energy-related political commitments of OSCE participating States.

The OSCE, as a platform for dialogue and exchange of best practices, has the potential to play a more relevant role in the future on the security-related aspects of energy.

I hope this meeting will generate tangible recommendations and enable us to engage in pragmatic and result-oriented work in line with the Slovak Chairmanship motto: for people, dialog & stability.

Thank you.