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PC.DEL/327/20
13 March 2020

ENGLISH only



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the OSCE Economic and Environment Activities Coordinator Ambassador Vuk Žugić

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador James S. Gilmore III
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 12, 2020

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Ambassador Žugić and your team, for the excellent work you do in helping participating States make progress on their commitments in the Second Dimension.

I appreciate that your office is tasked with addressing wide-ranging interpretations of what participating States believe should be the role and focus of the Second Dimension, and the Office of Economic and Environmental Activities. Some view it from the perspective of the Helsinki Final Act: to build cooperation and trust. Some see it as well through the lens of the 2003 Maastricht Strategy for the Economic and Environmental Dimension: to prevent conflict, advance the market economy, and build good governance and the rule of law as a foundation for stability and growth. These approaches are not incompatible.

Indeed, there is a logical progression of OSCE commitments in the Second Dimension that underlies our collective engagement and the engagement of the Office of the Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities. When participating States respect the rule of law and good governance, thus advancing the development of market-based economies, they build trust with trade partners operating under the same set of market-based assumptions. Trust built upon the rule of law and good governance leads to increased cooperation, creating conditions conducive to integration based on shared values and rules, leading in turn to greater stability, regional security, and prosperity.

A handful of delegations might continue to urge you to divert your limited time and resources from the path I have just described. Despite the majority of participating States' consistent message that some organizations, such as the Eurasian Economic Union, simply do not qualify as OSCE partners according to the Istanbul Document, a handful of delegations continue to distract our efforts in Vienna. I recognize that your office is caught in the middle of this and

faces demands for projects, initiatives, and partnerships for which there is minimal support. I encourage you to remain firm in resisting such efforts.

The United States stands behind the foundational concepts of the Second Dimension and all our OSCE commitments, and we appreciate that the activities of your office prove that you do as well. Your report, for instance, focuses on the core need to prevent and combat corruption and promote the rule of law, including through the use of new technology. Strengthening good governance and the rule of law boosts economic growth, public services, environmental protection, and overall prosperity. Stable and prosperous societies are more resilient to outside interference and hybrid attacks. Stable and prosperous societies also make better trading partners and offer opportunities for foreign investors. Economic opportunities help to ensure people are less susceptible to radicalization and criminality, which can further destabilize individual countries and the wider region.

We welcome serious discussions on these topics in the Second Committee and have committed substantial extra-budgetary resources to your office in these efforts, some of which you just mentioned. We encourage other participating States to do so as well. I also noted in your report your emphasis on “tangible and measurable results and impact” and more effectively communicating success stories; we look forward to working with you to help shine a spotlight on your excellent work. Similarly, your office’s efforts to enhance energy security address another key challenge in our region. We discussed this a great deal last year, and I encourage you to continue working actively in this area. Your office’s virtual training center is an excellent example of using new technologies to help participating States implement their OSCE commitments.

Thank you again, Ambassador, for your report to the Permanent Council. I look forward to continuing our excellent relations and productive partnership. As always, I’d like to reiterate our support to you, to your office, and to the Second Dimension as an integral component of the OSCE’s comprehensive security approach.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.