

First Preparatory Meeting of the 21st OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

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

Vienna, 4-5 February 2012

**Opening address of the OSCE Permanent Council Chairman,
Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk**

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the Ukrainian Chairmanship it is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the First Preparatory Meeting of the 21st OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum.

At the outset, I would also like to warmly welcome the new OSCE Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, Mr. Halil Yurdakul Yigitgüden, who joined the OSCE team last week, and to wish him every success in performing his responsible duties. I am sure that under his guidance, and with the support of his professional colleagues, the OCEEA will contribute to the Chairmanship’s goal to increase the effectiveness of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Dimension.

In its Priorities for Action, the Ukrainian Chairmanship has stressed that it considers the OSCE as a unique platform for conducting an open dialogue among equal partners. In our view this means working in the spirit of Helsinki to maintain a balanced approach across all three OSCE dimensions, to pursue the principles and goals of this Organization and to promote trust, confidence and co-operation among the participating States. In that regard, most relevant issues relating to Economic and Environmental Dimension may be reflected in the “Helsinki+40” process and I am confident that with the support of the Chair of the Economic and Environmental Committee, Ambassador Ol’ga Algayerova, and the engagement of all OSCE participating States we will be able to further

strengthen co-operation in the second dimension, thus advancing the work towards a security community.

Another aspect that we have stressed in our Priorities for Action is “co-operation”. Indeed, the Chairmanship strongly believes that promoting co-operation on economic and environmental matters contributes to greater stability, security and prosperity. On the other hand, neglecting economic and environmental challenges and problems may increase tensions inside and between States and regions. This applies as well to issues related to energy, and that is why we will emphasise the aspect of co-operation in the whole Forum process.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, H.E. Mr. Leonid Kozhara stated in his address to the OSCE Permanent Council last January: *“It would hardly be possible to promote a comprehensive and lasting security in the OSCE region without properly addressing the existing challenges in the economic and environmental sphere, including energy security”*. This approach guided us when we proposed the theme for this year's Forum.

The topics “energy” and “environment” and their security implications are not new to the Organization. The theme *“Increasing stability and security: Improving the environmental footprint of energy related activities in the OSCE region”* draws on the work already undertaken by the Belgian, Spanish, Greek and Lithuanian Chairmanships, as well as on the 2010 Astana Summit Commemorative Declaration.

We are all aware that security issues in the context of energy and environment are pressing and need to be addressed. Given the OSCE’s relevant position as a platform for dialogue, I believe that the Organization should contribute to the energy security dialogue, not only among its participating States, but also among leading experts, the private sector, the civil society, and international organizations specialized in energy-related issues. The expertise of the OCEEA and of the OSCE field operations are important tools at the disposal of all participating States to improve the environmental footprint of energy-related activities in the OSCE region.

Throughout this year we will have ample opportunities to discuss energy and environmental challenges to security, as well as to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy co-operation in the OSCE area.

In this respect, I would like to draw attention of the participants of the meeting to the OCEEA “Background paper on the theme of the

Forum“ distributed last week, which identifies reduction of the environmental impact of energy-related activities as one of our common challenges.

By prioritizing the energy efficiency as well as broader use of alternative and renewable sources of energy we intend to contribute to further development of energy dialogue within the OSCE as well as to generate political will for enhancing co-operation in the field of energy security without politicizing this issue.

The Ukrainian Chairmanship proposes to focus the discussions during the Forum process on a number of specific issues such as:

- Addressing environmental risks from energy-related activities;
- Promoting renewable energy, energy efficiency and energy savings;
- Promoting and supporting good governance and public participation in decision making in the environmental sector;
- Supporting co-operation between public and private sectors;
- Promoting technology transfer and co-operation on research and development for new technologies.

Our aim is to develop ideas further and come up with recommendations for a clearer and strengthened role for the OSCE. We will strive to facilitate a comprehensive and meaningful dialogue on these issues. By the end of this year, we do hope all participating States would be in the position to agree on a reinforced mandate for the OSCE and its executive structures in the field of energy and environment.

I am confident that the discussions that will be initiated today will promote cooperation and help achieve this goal. We should be able through this collective process to reach consensus on practical and balanced recommendations.

I encourage you to participate actively in the discussions and wish you all an interesting and stimulating Forum here in Vienna. The Chairmanship looks forward to discussions in the days ahead.

Thank you for your attention.