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**Your Excellencies,**

**Dear Colleagues,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am very honoured to welcome you to the first Session of the First Preparatory Meeting of the 30<sup>th</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum. I would like to thank the Polish 2022 OSCE Chairmanship for organizing this event, offering wide opportunities and viable solutions to a sustainable economic recovery, despite the overwhelming consequences of the pandemic.

This COVID-19 pandemic crisis was different from previous global disruptions. It has affected everyone – from rock stars to queens, from factory workers to CEOs, and every country around the globe. Once again it has demonstrated how interconnected we all are, and how seemingly distant events on the other side of the globe may disrupt our own lives.

In every crisis lies an opportunity. We also have witnessed three major trends, that we should capitalise on:

1. Unprecedented level of stimulus packages to keep businesses and citizens afloat when our regular life got still and locked down.
2. Unprecedented level of swift, lean, and agile cooperation between the public sector, businesses, NGOs and private citizens, especially in the outset of the pandemic with major uncertainty of the risks involved and shortages of medical supplies.
3. Unprecedented speed of gaining digital skills across all layers of the society – from kindergartens and pre-schools to seniors in the remote villages, that had to learn quickly to connect online, buy groceries, reach out to doctor or keep social connections and family ties via Zoom. I am confident, that creates an excellent pillar to thrive in the future, including the silver economy of the increasingly ageing population.

Unprecedented times require unprecedented solutions. Our legal frameworks shall enable to take fast decisions, especially during a crisis.

**Resilience is not just another law or stimulus funds, resilience is creativity and virtuous willingness to act by nurturing your core values and pursuing your wealth building efforts despite of unknown, adverse, or hostile environment.**

**The feeling of power is very contagious and alluring. Yet the power can be not only of brutal dominance, originating from force, it can be inspiring and uplifting, originating from co-creating new things, ideas, and wealth of nations together.**

I want to share few examples from my homeland Lithuania of innovative response to the pandemic by the public and private sectors. We have kept one of the highest GDP growth rates and last year recorded all-time highest exports volumes.

Several hackathons were launched to hack the crisis and find innovative solutions for the most pressing challenges, that turned into numerous successful start-ups.

A number of civic initiatives, like Gedimino legionas (League of Gediminas) or Laikykitės medikai (Hold on, Doctors) were created to solve shortages of medical supplies and other disruptions to normal life, that managed to act faster and more effectively than a public sector, burdened with bureaucracy and slow procurement procedures.

Leaders from all areas of the society were invited to contribute to the public efforts of recovery, from the Innovation council to Advisory board on the structural reforms and deployment of the EU recovery and resilience facility.

Our capital city Vilnius has temporally removed local taxes and regulations and turned all streets and squares into cafes and restaurants to revive badly affected HORECA sector and keep-up the spirits of population. It also turned streets into open-air art galleries while the largest exhibition centre was turned into vaccination hot-spot.

My own family has started a global initiative [Helmet-Based Ventilation.com](https://www.helmet-based-ventilation.com), which facilitate sharing of expertise in resolving the most critical bottleneck, the shortage of ventilation equipment at the intensive care units in hospitals worldwide. When logistic lines were disrupted and even borders were closed for trade, especially for the medical supplies, we have curated the latest expertise from the front lines and facilitated numerous engineering and investment initiatives across the world to design and produce **out of local materials at the local facilities** helmets for respiratory distress, that could save around 30-40% of critically ill patients from intubation.

Interconnectedness of the world means the fast spread of all sorts of crisis and its ripple effects, but at the same time it enables quick and agile cooperation, co-

creation, collective intelligence, the power of weak ties across flux networks of different nations.

**If we speak about European security, we must treasure the freedom, including the free will to act swiftly and creatively.**