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**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
AT THE FIRST PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE
24th OSCE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM**

Vienna, 25 January 2016

Opening session

Mr. Chairperson,
Ladies and gentlemen,

We join in welcoming the participants in the first preparatory meeting, which opens the 24th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, dedicated to strengthening stability and security through co-operation on good governance.

In particular, we should like to thank the German Chairmanship and the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities for their excellent organization and the interesting and varied agenda. The topics of good governance of environmental protection and the promotion of environmentally-friendly business have in recent times become of increasing importance for every single OSCE participating State and OSCE Partner for Co-operation, without exception.

Environmental protection has turned into the kind of global issue for which the solution requires a comprehensive approach and a system of effective measures which replenish natural resources and prevent pollution of the oceans and atmosphere and deforestation. For over a century, humankind has thoughtlessly been wasting its wealth of natural resources; now the time has come for us to recognize that the planet's reserves are finite and that they require not only rational usage, but also replenishment.

The challenges of environmental protection are drawing more and more attention in the Russian Federation. At the State level, activities impacting the environment are being managed by bodies which have specially been granted a mandate for this, foremost among which are the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment, the Federal Service for Hydrometeorology and Environmental Monitoring and the Ministry for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Disaster Relief.

At present, the main order of business for updating Russia's environmental protection policy is to carry out mass reforms to harmonize environmental law with Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development standards.

The reform is geared towards establishing a radically new system for Russia that incentivizes investment in the environment. One crucial instrument has been the Best Available Technology Act of 21 July 2014 (No. 219-FZ) which obligates companies to introduce economically viable technologies to minimize the creation of waste and emissions. Another instrument is the Waste Act (Federal Act No. 458-FZ of 29 December 2014 on the Introduction of Amendments to the Federal Act on Production and Consumption Waste), which was adopted at the end of 2014 and is designed to usher in a new industry for recycling. The transition to best available technologies is predicted to take 7 to 14 years and will ultimately make a positive difference of 75 to 80 per cent to the impact on the environment in the country. Initiatives also continue to be sought to allay fears that the road to environmental awareness will merely create added administrative pressure, increase financial costs and undermine the climate for entrepreneurship.

The Russian Government considers that shifting to new technologies, turning away from outdated dirty factories and increasing environmental requirements for companies is likely to boost the long-term momentum for the country's economic development and make it more competitive. Real progress is being made in Russia to develop environmentally sound projects in the green economy. All this makes the topic of environmental reform, amidst the tough circumstances currently faced by Russia, one of the most important issues on the agenda for the country's development, although it goes far beyond the realm strictly of environmental protection. It essentially concerns tools for overcoming the shortcomings of the previous economic model and paving the way for a new one which can guarantee sustainable economic growth and reduce the reliance on external factors, including geopolitical ones.

The protection of the environment affects each and every one of us. What we do today will to some degree impact the lives of future generations. The quality of life of our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will depend upon our actions, as will the air that they breathe, the water that they drink and whether they are able to see the fauna and flora that surround us now in all their diversity. That is why close co-operation between all elements of society – the State, civil society, the business sector and scientific circles – is essential.

We expect the dialogue during the meeting to be serious, productive and well-informed and that representatives of participating States' delegations will be able to share their experiences and examples of best practices of environmental protection. We are hoping over the next two days to come to meaningful conclusions that confirm the role of the OSCE as an appropriate platform for discussion and one that can foster co-operation in the environmental field.

Thank you for your attention.