

**29th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum
Vienna, 17-18 February, 2020**

**FIRST PREPARATORY MEETING
Opening Statement**

Delegation of Armenia

We would like to thank the Albanian Chairmanship and the OSCE Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities and their teams for convening first Preparatory Meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum. Our thanks go to the distinguished speakers for their comprehensive addresses.

We welcome Chairmanship's focus on the topics such as preventing and combating corruption, transparency and digitalization. The chosen topics will enable us to include new prospective of innovation and digitalization in our work.

Combatting corruption remains a priority for the Government of Armenia and culture of zero-tolerance of corruption and right based approach is being developed in our country. We are pleased that Deputy Minister of Justice of Armenia will present the experience of our country in the fight against corruption.

Armenia values the extra-budgetary project "Strengthening anti-corruption reform in Armenia" which is an important platform for cooperation between the OSCE and Armenia. To this end we thank the OSCE Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities and donor countries for their support.

It goes without saying that the topic of corruption is timely and relevant. Our Organization has a niche to address and foster fight against corruption, good governance and rule of law which have a direct impact on security and political stability in the OSCE area. The reports concerning corrupt practices at national and particularly international levels demonstrate the seriousness of the problem. Therefore, this topic deserves continuous attention of our security Organization.

Digitalization is an extremely important tool for prevention of corruption. It has the potential to foster inclusive economic participation, promote international and regional cooperation among peoples thus enabling efficient realization of economic and social rights of people including across dividing lines and closed borders. Therefore, in the context of Economic and Environmental dimension digitalization has an important confidence building potential.

Ministerial Declaration on the Digital Economy as a Driver for promoting Cooperation, Security and Growth creates new directions of cooperation within the OSCE and commits the participating States to capitalize on digitalization.

We should build on this and take relevant actions aimed at bridging the digital divides, upholding the rule of law, protecting human rights and promoting digital connectivity in line with our commitments.

We look forward to interesting exchange and stand ready to make our contribution to this end.

Thank you.