



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

**24<sup>th</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum**

**“Strengthening stability and security through co-operation on good governance”**

**FIRST PREPARATORY MEETING**

**Vienna, 25 - 26 January 2016**

OSCE Congress Centre, Hofburg, Heldenplatz, 1010 Vienna

**Welcoming Remarks**

**Secretary General Lamberto Zannier**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I warmly welcome you to this First Preparatory Meeting of the 24th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum. Throughout the Forum process this year, we will discuss different aspects of good governance. This first meeting is dedicated to **environmental governance** – and there are good reasons for this.

We have already touched on this topic in previous Forum processes. For example, last year saw extensive discussion of **water governance**, and in 2014 we focused on **disaster risk reduction**. In both cases, sustainable management of natural resources and environmental governance were key considerations in identifying and applying structured responses and durable solutions.

We have come a long way since the **2003 Maastricht Strategy**, which reaffirmed the OSCE’s commitment to sustainable development and the **2007 Madrid Ministerial Declaration** on Environment and Security. Environmental governance has gained in prominence over time and clearly deserves more attention. Creating and sustaining an enabling environment for a vocal civil society, an informed and responsive public, and efficient institutions for sound management of the environment and natural resources will continue to be our priority in the OSCE.

Environmental good governance is an integral part of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit last September. We need to consider how the OSCE can best contribute to fostering sustainable development within this framework. Discussions today and tomorrow should help us to identify opportunities for further action. After all, sustainable development, which depends on a careful balance among social, economic and environmental factors, is the best

guarantee for ensuring peace and prosperity. To quote from the 2030 Agenda: “**There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development**”.

Environmental good governance and sustainable development are central elements of the economic and environmental dimension of the **OSCE’s comprehensive approach to security**. The OSCE has been increasingly active in supporting its participating States in their efforts to strengthen environmental good governance through awareness-raising and the exchange of best practices, capacity-building and numerous projects in the field of environment and security.

Many of our activities take place in the framework of the Environment and Security Initiative – **ENVSEC**. I mention this not just because we are proud to be part of this longstanding and successful international partnership, but also because the OSCE holds the Chairmanship of this initiative this year. We will make every effort to demonstrate and reinforce the role of environmental co-operation in promoting sustainable development in our region. I am happy to see that most of our ENVSEC partners have joined us for this meeting.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The OSCE is an inclusive platform for dialogue with four decades of experience in bringing very different stakeholders together around one table. However, our links to the **business community** are not as strong or as close as they could and should be. [As we have heard from Ambassador Pohl] the German Chairmanship is setting out to change this through various initiatives to enhance OSCE interaction with the private sector. I fully support this approach, and I hope that it will lead to an increase in public-private partnerships to address issues on the OSCE agenda, particularly in the economic and environmental dimension. So I very pleased to a number of representatives of the private sector at this first preparatory meeting, which will highlight the importance of good environmental governance for a healthy business climate and sustainable development.

Over the course of this year the OSCE will seek to **enhance our relationship with business and the private sector**. The next preparatory meeting in Berlin will offer another good opportunity to do this.

Returning to the 2030 Agenda, one particular goal – **no. 16** – speaks of peaceful and inclusive societies that feature effective, accountable and transparent institutions; responsive, participatory, and representative decision-making; the rule of law; and access to justice for all. Such societies are more likely to create a favourable environment for business to excel and to attract more and higher-quality investment, generating sustainable growth.

Environmental considerations need not be an obstacle to development. On the contrary, they can be a catalyst for innovation, entrepreneurship, productivity and job creation. This contributes to prosperity and thus helps us to achieve stable and peaceful societies. Certainly we cannot ignore the fact that some investments and business activities have a negative environmental impact. However, we have advanced instruments to help us assess the negative impact that economic activities might have on the environment and on communities, and to help us determine how to mitigate them. If existing frameworks and

tools are appropriately applied, they can help to address the concerns and interests of all stakeholders, which in turn can help prevent tensions and conflicts.

The OSCE is actively supporting its participating States in this way, above all through our **network of Aarhus Centres**, which promote and facilitate public participation, access to information, and access to justice in environmental matters. Sixty Aarhus Centres in 14 OSCE participating States are playing an important role in strengthening civil society and its links with state authorities and the private sector at various levels.

So let's now concentrate on today's agenda, with an operational focus. I would like to thank our featured speakers and all participants for joining us here in Vienna. Your insights and practical suggestions will help us to advance our thinking on the role that the OSCE can realistically play to foster good environmental governance as a decisive factor in securing a sustainable, more peaceful future.

Thank you.