



OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

Concluding Meeting

“Promoting economic progress and security in the OSCE area through energy co-operation, new technologies, good governance and connectivity in the digital era”

OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger

Prague, 11 September 2019

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear colleagues,

I welcome you to this concluding meeting of the 2019 Economic and Environmental Forum. This year’s Forum process has reflected on a wide spectrum of security issues in the second dimension. Special emphasis has been placed on new technologies and on energy security, so I will focus my remarks on these two topics.

Already last year’s Forum discussions explored the nexus between technology and security. They paved the way for two positive outcomes at the Milan Ministerial Council – a declaration on the digital economy, and a decision on human capital in the digital era.

This year, with the support of the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship, we are moving the technology-conscious track in our dialogue to the next level – here at the Forum and across the OSCE’s comprehensive security portfolio.

We have discussed the use of new and emerging technologies in relation to anti-trafficking, counter-terrorism, freedom of the media, and many other issues. Just last week, the impact of rapid technological change on security was the main focus of the OSCE Asian Conference in Tokyo. And at an OSCE workshop in Minsk, participants discussed techniques for investigating trafficking in human beings with officials from cyber police units from various participating States.

This more in-depth appraisal of technology and security is set to continue in all three dimensions. Next week's Annual Police Experts Meeting will be exclusively dedicated to the role of artificial intelligence in policing. And on 8 November, I will host a Security Days event in Vienna that will focus on the ethical, human-rights dimension of the use of new technologies in countering transnational threats.

At the intersection of technology and security, OSCE confidence-building measures to reduce the risks of conflict stemming from the use of ICTs remains a flagship OSCE initiative. And let's not forget that operationally, we are successfully integrating technology into our field work, most prominently in Ukraine.

So I think it is fair to say that the OSCE is embracing the technology-security nexus in a proactive way. And I welcome the OSCE Chairmanship's efforts to work towards a possible Ministerial Council deliverable on the security implications of emerging technologies. This is a conversation that will certainly intensify as we go forward.

Dear colleagues,

I also see great merit in strengthening energy co-operation to increase energy security and sustainability – the second major element of the Chairmanship’s ambition for the second dimension at the Bratislava Ministerial Council.

The ongoing energy transition is not just a shift from one set of fuels to another. It involves a much deeper transformation of the world’s energy systems, and it will have major social, economic, environmental and political implications that go well beyond the energy sector. Significant uncertainty and new security challenges are part of this transition.

At a time when we depend on uninterrupted electricity supply, our countries are experiencing an exceptional increase in the number of blackouts and other power disruptions. While digitalization can help to reduce human failure and increase the interoperability of energy systems, it also exposes our critical infrastructures to new vulnerabilities with cascading effects on other vital sectors of society.

Responding to the multiple requirements of this energy transition, while also considering economic efficiency and environmental sustainability, is an ongoing challenge for all OSCE participating States. By seeking common responses, we can help seize opportunities for enhancing energy security across our region.

The OSCE could, for example, facilitate the sharing of best practices by creating a network of energy security experts. We could also encourage closer co-operation between research institutes on energy research and innovation. This could be done in the framework of the soon-to-be-established *Virtual Competency Training Centre on the Protection of Critical Energy Networks*.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There's a third point I'd like to make. The OSCE's second dimension has been closely connected to sustainable development for many years. Even a cursory mapping of the OSCE's activities in relation to the UN's 2030 Agenda reveals a remarkable level of compatibility. Specific references to the 2030 Agenda were included in the 2016 Hamburg Ministerial Decision on strengthening good governance and promoting connectivity, and in the 2018 Milan Ministerial Declaration on the digital economy.

Our work on energy security has strong economic and environmental components and is firmly linked to Sustainable Development Goal 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy). So I encourage OSCE participating States to make this link visible in a possible deliverable on this topic. The OSCE already meaningfully contributes to the 17 SDGs. It would make sense to communicate these linkages proactively not only because we are part of one global community, but also because the SDGs are such an important reference system for all participating States and many of our partners.

In conclusion, I would like to thank our host, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the OCEEA and the OSCE Documentation Center, for organizing this Forum meeting in the usual splendid and efficient manner. I am confident that the exchange of knowledge and ideas during the meeting will provide significant food for thought and inspiration in the run-up to the Ministerial Council in December.

Thank you.