



United States Mission to the OSCE

Opening Statement at the 28th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum 2nd Preparatory Meeting

As delivered by Dustin DeGrande, Political Officer
June 15, 2020

Thank you, Ambassador Hasani, and to the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship for prioritizing the fight against corruption, and Mr. Li Yong and Professor Severino for your keynote speeches. I would also like to thank OSCE Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities Ambassador Žugić and his able team for their contributions to this effort and coordination of the Economic and Environmental Forum (EEF).

The United States welcomes an in-depth discussion on how to build upon our past commitments, clarify areas for greater engagement, and introduce new ideas in the fight against corruption. The issues we are discussing this week – corruption, money laundering, organized crime, terrorist financing, and trafficking in natural resources – are cross-dimensional. But we add value in this committee by addressing them from an economic and environmental perspective, particularly through the lens of fighting corruption. That’s especially important now as we look to rebuild our economies in the wake of the pandemic in a way that makes them stronger, more efficient, environmentally sustainable, and resilient to shocks.

At the first EEF Preparatory Meeting in February, we explored the issue of corruption in the OSCE region. We assessed the big picture, exchanged ideas on how to employ digitalization and transparency to fight corruption, and reintroduced the topic of preventing and combating corruption to improve the environment. After more than three years of discussions, a side event hosted by the informal Group of Friends of the Environment galvanized support for further exploring how corruption feeds trafficking in natural resources, including by organized criminal groups. After addressing the “why” in February, we look forward to turning this week to the question of “how.”

For instance, in Session III, we will address the question, “*How* can the OSCE use its anti-corruption tools to fight trafficking in natural resources?” The answers might lie in economic development programs to prevent vulnerable individuals from turning to trafficking and poaching, environmental outreach to reduce consumer demand for trafficked fauna and flora, and efforts to strengthen the capacity of democratic institutions to tackle the corruption that facilitates illicit trade.

The United States prioritizes fighting corruption, organized crime, and trafficking in natural resources, and we look forward to participating actively this week. The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the urgent need for the OSCE and other partners to tackle these problems.

That's why we invited expert practitioners to this meeting. Supervisory Special Agent Anthony Sankey from the FBI's Public Corruption Unit will speak in Session II, and Deputy Chief Joseph Poux from the U.S. Department of Justice's Environmental Crimes Unit and Chair of Interpol's Pollution Crime Working Group will present under Session III.

Once again, the United States thanks the Albanian Chairmanship and the Office of the Coordinator for your hard work organizing the preparatory forum, even under uniquely challenging circumstances.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.