



United States Mission to the OSCE

**Response to the Coordinator of OSCE
Economic and Environmental Activities
Ambassador Vuk Žugić**

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Harry R. Kamian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 23, 2017

The United States warmly welcomes Ambassador Žugić for your update today on the work of the OSCE's Office of Economic and Environmental Activities – your first report to the Permanent Council as Coordinator. We also commend you on the balanced, forward-leaning, and inclusive approach taken during your first few months in office. On a more personal note, in our first few months working together, I have always found you to be frank and constructive, and I applaud the way in which you focus on integrating the work of the Second Dimension into the other two pillars, so thank you very much for that.

The United States welcomes your Office's focus on issues of common interest among OSCE participating States, specifically – as you describe in your report – the promotion of good governance, transportation and trade, improving migration governance, and addressing environmental and security challenges. These priorities align well with the consensus decisions reached in Hamburg in 2016.

Ambassador, you have stated your commitment to aligning your Office's efforts with the goals of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. We welcome this approach and agree with your assessment that the OSCE can play an important role in this area. As a regional security platform for cross-border cooperation and dialogue, we agree with you that the OSCE is well positioned to act on these issues. And we share your view that the OSCE's economic and environmental activities are important elements of our comprehensive approach to security.

One such area in which the OSCE has played a crucial role is on transboundary water cooperation, which you mentioned. Your Office's Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative is another effective example of thinking beyond borders to provide critical early warning assessments of transboundary extreme weather events that could be exacerbated by climate change. In addition, the 60 Aarhus centers across the region provide on-the-ground support to help the OSCE and participating States better deliver on their assessments and commitments. The centers also help build credibility at the local level, enabling more effective sharing of reliable information with the public.

The United States also commends the efforts in the OSCE's Second Dimension to address the specific challenges facing women. Across the broad range of OSCE economic and environmental activities, Ambassador, you and your staff have continued to identify ways in which gender issues can be incorporated to give these initiatives greater impact.

Mr. Ambassador, the United States supports the collaborative approach you and your Office have taken. When there has been consensus, you have engaged with organizations that share common goals and approaches. Such examples include the UN Economic Commission for Europe, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, and the European Commission, among others. In that regard, we were took note when reading your report, and listening to your statement today, about the intention of exploring cooperation with other organizations, including the Eurasian Economic Union – something on which there is no consensus. The U.S. Position on this issue is well known, so I don't think it is necessary, in the interest of time, to repeat it here. What I would like to say is that it is clear from our long constructive engagement with your office, and from today's reports, that in our view you are constructively working on a wide range of very important issues across the full range of countries within the OSCE region. Your agenda is quite full, and I think it is correctly ambitious. With regards to your reference about the limited resources at your disposal: as you consider exploring other areas for cooperation with other organizations, the United States would strongly recommend that the limited resources that you do have at your disposal, perhaps they could be most effectively directed in those areas where consensus exists.

In closing, the United States supports the two Ministerial Council decisions currently being negotiated in the Second Dimension on economic participation and greening the economy. We believe these can help strengthen security and stability, and can give your Office the necessary tools and resources to focus on OSCE priorities.

And finally, congratulations to you, and your staff for twenty years of promoting peace, security, and stability through economic and environmental initiatives. We look forward to continuing our excellent relationship and productive partnership.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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