



**United States Mission to the OSCE**

**Opening Statement at the  
26<sup>th</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental  
Forum 2<sup>nd</sup> Preparatory Meeting  
Venice, Italy**

As delivered by Dustin DeGrande, Political Officer  
May 24, 2018

I would like to begin by thanking Ambassadors Azzoni and Mati from the Italian OSCE Chairmanship and Ambassador Žugić, Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, for organizing this week's preparatory meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum.

I would also like to thank Special Representative Severino and Secretary General Quattrocio for their remarks. The United States applauds the Italian Chairmanship for demonstrating its prioritization of anti-corruption through the appointment and participation of Professor Severino. We look forward to continuing to engage actively in this important area.

This week, we are exploring the opportunities and challenges in developing human capital for economic progress. On the surface, this sometimes appears to be a question for a development agency, rather than a security organization. However, as we made clear in the Vienna ministerial decision on economic participation, economic progress promotes social cohesion, stability, and security, and positively contributes to the prevention of terrorism and the fight against organized crime. When citizens have the skills to gain meaningful employment that is sufficient at least to care for their families, they are less likely to engage in criminal behavior. And when the rule of law is stable enough to allow them to access these jobs, it is also likely strong enough to reinforce trust in public institutions and investment climate, leading directly to economic growth. The alternative – a corrupt government and lack of opportunity, which can lead some citizens, especially youth, to turn to criminality and social unrest – is a direct threat to the security of the OSCE region.

Ultimately, as Professor Severino pointed out, any real, long-term progress on the question of human capital development can only come about through good governance and meaningful measures to attack corruption. The OSCE region's unemployed or underemployed youth can get the best job skills training in the world, but this will mean nothing if nepotism and bribes determine one's chances for a job. Bookending this week's discussion with conversations on business climate this morning, and good governance tomorrow, is an excellent way to drive this point home.

Finally, Assuming the rule of law and transparency are firmly rooted in our societies, we must then turn our attention to the relevance of how we are preparing citizens to participate in

today's economy. The United States places great emphasis on helping to link youth to the private sector. With regards to youth and other employment, for instance, from 2011 to 2015, USAID programs around the world have connected more than 609,000 individuals with new or improved employment. The Italian Chairmanship's plan for this week also notably focuses on the importance of exploring digitalization, both to tackle corruption, as well as to help citizens, through job skills training and access to the labor market – even from remote locations.

Once again, the United States thanks the Italian Chairmanship and OSCE Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities for organizing this week's preparatory forum. We look forward to engaging actively in these conversations and sharing our specialists' expertise.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.