



EUROPEAN UNION

26th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum Second Preparatory Meeting Venice, 24–25 May 2018

EU Opening Statement

The European Union and its Member States are pleased to participate in the Second Preparatory Meeting of the 26th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum and would like to thank the Italian Chairmanship and the OSCE Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities and his team for organising this meeting, including the side event yesterday. We also thank the keynote speakers for their presentations.

The decision of the Italian chairmanship to appoint a special representative on combatting corruption underlines the crucial importance of the topic and we welcome this opportunity for a first exchange.

The EBRD is an important strategic partner for the EU and lends valuable support to EU policies and objectives such as the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Europe 2020 Strategy for growth and jobs, the EU's response to the migration challenge and the promotion of norms and values, in particular in the environmental field. The conclusion of an MoU between the EBRD and the OSCE last December underlined that these topics are also of high relevance for the OSCE's economic and environmental dimension of security.

This year's EEF covers a number of important topics that play a role in fostering economic progress and security in the OSCE area: innovation, human capital development, and good public and corporate governance. Digitalisation is clearly a key factor in these areas – with all its challenges and opportunities.

Advancing good governance remains a high priority for the EU. This is reflected both in the EU's internal and external policies. With its clear link to sustainable development, security and stability, we believe good governance belongs to the core

of the OSCE's work. We also appreciate the opportunity to address questions related to the development of human capital, employment opportunities and skills which are relevant for economic participation. In order for our work to have an impact, close cooperation with all key stakeholders is crucial. In this respect we are particularly looking forward to exploring ways to cooperate and join forces with actors from the private sector.

Being a regional security organisation and a forum for political dialogue, we regard the OSCE as well-placed to facilitate exchanges of best practices and stimulate further compliance of participating States with OSCE and other international commitments.

In conclusion, we are looking forward to fruitful discussions in the coming days and stand ready to engage constructively in our deliberations in the coming months and leading up to the Ministerial Council in Milano.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, and SERBIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country LIECHTENSTEIN, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, ARMENIA, GEORGIA and ANDORRA, align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.