

**OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum 1<sup>st</sup> Preparatory Meeting  
Vienna, 22-23 January 2018**

**Opening Statement**

**Armenia**

Mr. Chairman.

We would like to express our gratitude to the OSCE Italian Chairmanship and the OSCE Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities, as well as their able teams for organising the First Preparatory Meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum. Our thanks go to the distinguished speakers for shaping framework of our discussions.

We support focus of this year's forum on innovation, human capital development, and good governance as drivers for economic progress and security. The chosen topic provides opportunity to build on the ideas and discussions on economic participation, while at the same time incorporating new avenues.

Ensuring economic freedom and right to development for all is an essential prerequisite to development of human capital and innovation.

Digital economy can promote good governance, transparency and accountability at all levels, thus enabling more efficient realization of inalienable economic and social rights of people in the entire OSCE area. Digitalization is an increasingly important tool for prevention of corruption.

Development of the role of information technologies, telecommunications and Internet in the sphere of economy can have not only positive impact on economic progress of participating States and peoples, but also promote connectivity, economic participation and social inclusion, international and regional cooperation among peoples, including across dividing lines and closed borders. Therefore, in the context of the OSCE digital economy has an important and untapped confidence building potential. OSCE is an appropriate forum to explore how digitalization of economy can promote trust, security and sustainable development.

Armenia is a country with rapidly growing IT sector, developing e-governance in both public and private sectors. History of the e-government in Armenia dates back to 2000, when the digital governance transformation process was launched by piloting number of electronic services, such as e-visa issuance, e-Cadastre, e-State Register, State Electronic Payment System to name a few. The number of internet users constitutes more than 70% of total population.

Average annual growth of IT sector in Armenia is 20% with close to 600 companies operating in our country.

The OSCE Office in Yerevan actively contributed development of e-governance by its regulatory guillotine project.

We believe that the OSCE can also serve as an important platform for exchanging good practices among participating States, as well as international organizations, which pursue agenda of economic integration.

We look forward to interesting and fruitful discussions and stand ready to make our contribution by bringing Armenia's perspective and good practices in innovative economy and electronic governance.

Thank you.