



EUROPEAN UNION

First Preparatory Meeting of the 31st OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum 29-30 April 2024, Vienna

EU Opening Statement

1. The European Union and its Member States are pleased to participate in the first preparatory meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum. We welcome Ms. Simone Borg, congratulate her on her appointment as Special Representative on Climate Change, and wish her every success in her work. We would also like to thank the speakers for their introductory remarks, which provided insight into the topics we will be addressing today, focusing on enhancing security and stability through digital innovation, contributing to sustainable development, and climate adaptation.
2. In this regard, we welcome the adoption of the PC decision on the 31st Economic and Environmental Forum (EEF). We regret that some participating States have systematically blocked PC decisions on mandated events. As mandated events should be the rule, not the exception, we would like to remind all participating States of the obligation for all mandated events across all three OSCE dimensions to take place.

Ambassador,

3. This Preparatory Meeting is taking place at a time of profound crisis for the OSCE region and beyond. Russia's unprovoked, unjustifiable and illegal war of

aggression against Ukraine, which we strongly condemn, has resulted in horrible human suffering and multifaceted, devastating consequences for Ukraine's economic, environmental, and energy security. We reaffirm our unwavering support to Ukraine and its people. The EU and its Member States also remain committed to addressing global food security, which is threatened by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

4. Russia's war has inflicted massive environmental damage, caused nuclear safety and security risks, and aggravated energy and food insecurity globally. We underline the need to assess the damage and are committed to address it in the context of Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction. Russia and its leadership must be held accountable for the damage caused by its war of aggression.
5. In today's meeting, we will discuss opportunities for promoting resilience and cooperation on topics of common interest, including strengthening good governance, combating corruption, energy security and critical energy infrastructure. We are pleased to see a dedicated session on strengthening cooperation to address challenges caused by energy insecurity, also in light of Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine. We also welcome the consideration of digital and technological innovations in the sessions of this meeting, which we consider essential for economic growth, prosperity and competitiveness, and consequently, stability and well-being in our societies.
6. In conclusion, we reiterate our support for the efforts of Malta's Chairpersonship. The EU places great value on the Economic and Environmental Dimension as an integral part of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security. We will continue to engage in economic and environmental cooperation as a tool for enhancing security, confidence-building, and conflict prevention in the OSCE region, in line with OSCE values and international commitments. In this context, we recognise the important role of the OSCE in addressing pressing common security challenges in the second dimension as part of its efforts towards achieving comprehensive security.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, and GEORGIA, the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, as well as ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.