

30<sup>th</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

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Panel Discussion: The Role of the Economic and Environmental Forum in advancing dialogue and co-operation in the second dimension

Remarks by Amb. Florian Raunig, Chair of EEC/Austria

Excellencies, Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to be among this group of distinguished Panellists to discuss the role of the Economic and Environmental Forum in advancing dialogue and cooperation in the Second Dimension. Given the current crisis and challenges we face it is of special importance to reflect on the way forward.

**The Second Dimension of OSCE is definitely unique in its joint focus on economic and environmental issues from the viewpoint of comprehensive security:**

Hence, the Second Dimension is not only contributing to the trias of comprehensive security within OSCE's three dimensions; it is also comprehensive in itself as it combines two important aspects, which in the past often have been dealt with separately or were even seen as being contradictory: Economy and Environment.

The interlinkage of both of these two aspects is crucial for further measures in order to provide stability and security. The overuse of natural resources, pollution and destruction of nature, excessive attempts to domesticate nature and environment have led to an alarming situation where massive loss of biodiversity and climate change are the most dangerous symptoms.

Hence, only an economy that respects and protects its natural environment can bring lasting security and stability. Therefore, the focus on the interlinkage between these two areas should be fostered and sustained in the future orientation of the Second Dimension and the EEF.

**When evaluating the work and success of the work in the Second Dimension, I would like to note the following:**

First, the Second Dimension is the sole Dimension where it was possible to adopt a commitment at the last Ministerial Council. This shows how relevant this dimension is for our Organisation as well as the potential that still lies in it and waits to be mobilized. That being said, the creation of new commitments seems unlikely in the near future due to the ongoing crisis of our Organisation caused by Russia's unprovoked attack on Ukraine.

Thus, this might be the right time to review and take stock of the commitments that have been established thus far and how they can serve in the current crises. There are over 70 commitments in the Second Dimension, many of them quite ambitious and innovative. Hence, it might be helpful to evaluate, if and how they have been realised respectively what are the impediments to their implementation.

Second, the programmes and projects of the OCEEA and the OSCE's Field Missions are robust and pertinent tools of the Second Dimension because they are flexible, impact-driven and bottom-up by nature.

Being a tool for trans-border co-operation as well as trust and confidence building, these tangible projects also support participating States' Governments and Administrations in tackling with pressing challenges and solving urgent problems.

However, in order to enhance the effectiveness of the programmes and projects of the Second Dimension, in particular also having in mind fostering confidence and trust building, OCEEA's geographical scope of interventions could be widened, which means that OCEEA would be present with programmes and projects throughout the whole OSCE region.

In conclusion, I believe this discussion is timely and very important indeed to determine next steps and future orientation of the Second Dimension.

Yet, the humanitarian, economic and environmental disaster caused by Russia's war against Ukraine creates an additional obligation for the Organisation: Assisting Ukraine in dealing with the economic and environmental damages caused by this war: Damages that could have easily been avoided by just respecting principles and commitments of our Organisation which all participating States have commonly agreed to.