

**Prof. Severino/Key Note Speech**

**Open Data in Action.**

**Beneficial Ownership and Public Procurement**

**December 9th, 2020**

- Amb. Hasani, Hon. Charalambides, Mr. Kos, Amb. Zugic, Mr. Chair, Distinguished Authorities, it is a great pleasure and an honor, indeed, to address this audience today.
- First of all, allow me to congratulate Amb. Hasani for the great success of the Ministerial Council, a success made even more striking if measured against the perilous waters the Albanian Chairmanship had to sail through along this very difficult year.
- I feel honored to have enjoyed the privilege to partake of this great experience, built upon our joint efforts into further promoting the priority of the fight against corruption in the OSCE political ecosystem.
- The adoption by the Ministerial Council of a decision on “preventing and combating corruption through digitalization and increased transparency” does represent a great achievement for the Organization

and, more in general, for the international efforts in combating corruption.

- On top of introducing clear commitments for all Participating States in this domain, it does so by espousing principles and values I have been constantly promoting in my capacity as Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson. And very much so in respect to the driving theme of today's webinar.
- The role of digitalization; the principles of integrity, openness, transparency, accountability; the acknowledgement of the importance of full participation of the private sector, civil society, media and academia, in a whole-of-society approach to preventing and combating corruption; the recognition of the importance of open government data as an effective medium to increase transparency and accountability. All points listed above are among the priorities that, with the support of the Albanian Chairmanship, I have been trying to advance within the OSCE on the basis of my mandate.
- While the importance of fostering a more active role of the OSCE in combating corruption might sound obvious to all participants in this webinar, the consensus on an holistic approach such as the one that

has been embraced by the Albanian Chairmanship and finally being translated in the Decision I've just mentioned was not obvious when I first took the mandate of Special Representative during the Italian Chairmanship.

- This adds up to the deep satisfaction for the outcome of the Ministerial Council, and allows me once again to commend the deft leadership in the negotiations by Amb. Hasani.
- In our common endeavor, I could not miss mentioning the great support provided by Ambassador Zugic and OCEEA, particularly in fostering a deeper awareness within the OSCE on the importance of Promoting Good Governance and Enhancing Anti-Corruption Efforts through the Use of Open Data and New Digital Technologies.
- In this respect, allow me to recall that in 2019 the OCEEA launched a new project that aims to increase the capacity of OSCE participating States to prevent and combat corruption, by strengthening transparency and improving public sector integrity and accountability of national and municipal authorities through the use of open data and digital technologies.

- Through close collaboration with the Open Government Partnership (OGP), OECD and other international organizations working on open data/open government initiatives, OSCE/OCEEA works to build the capacity and expertise of OSCE pS on the use of innovative open data tools and new digital technologies that can enable governments and civil society to implement open data national commitments.
- More in general, in the area of digitalisation, national and international efforts in pursuing a sustainable response to the urgent needs dictated by the COVID 19 crisis, do require also a renewed commitment to go further in the digital transformation of companies and governments, such as e-government tools (automation of internal processes) and digital public services (getting an ID, paying taxes).
- Governments will need to not only invest in those infrastructures, but also ensure they can guarantee the protection of critical data. Transparency must be the guiding principle of any government digital agenda to keep the trust of their citizens.
- As you may recall, during my mandate in the OSCE, I have promoted a mature discussion on the multifaceted nature of technology, as a source both of challenges and opportunities.

- If there is one certainty emerging from the haze of the fight against COVID 19 is the urgent need to accelerate the digital transformation of our public governance systems. In particular as we do not forget that the pace and quality of economic recovery will be impacted. We should not miss this opportunity, to be pursued through inclusive engagement, ICT innovation and a stronger call for international and multilateral cooperation.
- More transparency and a deeper engagement of the civil society will feed into a more mature sense of ownership of the citizens toward the objective of reforming the public governance.
- Our common efforts in modernizing the tools and cultural matrix of the fight against corruption require, particularly in times of uncertainty such as the current one, equal efforts in forging a new social contract built on trust, solidarity and transparency, one where the private citizens and the business communities be called to act as responsible stake-holders, ready to take on the responsibility of being an active part in the enforcement of the principles of transparency and accountability.

- Thanking you once again for your kind attention, I wish you a fruitful discussion and give back the screen to our Chair.