



Rappresentanza Permanente d'Italia
OSCE

2023 PRAGUE FORUM ON THE OSCE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION
**“Promoting security and stability in the OSCE area through achieving sustainable
development and resilient and inclusive economic growth”**
Prague, 14-15 September 2023

OPENING SESSION

Mr Chair,

Italy aligns with the statement delivered by the European Union and would like to add some additional remarks in a national capacity.

Allow me first of all to express a sincere thanks to the North Macedonia Chairpersonship and the Office of the Coordinator on the Economic and Environmental Activities for the excellent organisation of this Conference and to our Czech hosts for their kind hospitality.

It is very much regrettable that no consensus was reached this year on the necessary decisions to hold the Economic Environmental Forum cycle. Last year, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Forum, participating States acknowledged its invaluable role as a unique platform for dialogue and cooperation between participating States, the business community and civil society on crucial economic and environmental issues. It remains the paramount responsibility of all participating States to cherish the important contribution of the Prague Forum to the OSCE comprehensive concept of security and to reach consensus on the mandated decisions.

Mr Chair,

the devastating economic and environmental impact of Russia’s senseless and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine are deeply felt in our region and beyond. The war has caused extensive environmental and economic damages in Ukraine, as well as the depletion or pollution of natural resources and the critical loss of biodiversity. The deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure by Russian forces amounts to a war crime and jeopardizes Ukraine’s efforts to rebuild the country. Rising energy and food prices have negatively affected the resilience of our economies and heightened the risk of insecurity for many in our region and across the world.

Working on these very important issues, the OSCE can make a significant contribution to strengthen the implementation of our joint commitments in the economic-environmental dimension through increased dialogue and cooperation. The Prague Forum is a special opportunity to highlight the work of the OSCE and the concrete impact that this Organization has on the lives of our citizens.

Mr Chair,

There are many examples of such an impact, thanks to the excellent work of the Office of the Coordinator on the Economic and Environmental Activities and of the OSCE field missions. In this context allow me to mention three projects, which are actively and proudly supported by Italy and which are in line with the Chairpersonship motto “It’s about people”.

First of all, OCEEA’s innovative project on climate change and energy security, which aims to raise awareness on current climate risk for key energy infrastructures in the OSCE and Mediterranean region. Building on the historic Stockholm Ministerial Council Decision from 2021, the OSCE is uniquely placed to open new avenues for cooperation among participating States, civil society organisations, academia and businesses. The availability of reliable and locally relevant climate-projection data is crucial to support decision-makers and energy practitioners in tackling one of the greatest challenge of our times.

Secondly, the OSCE actively promotes a holistic approach to youth crime prevention and the fight against corruption in the Western Balkans, through education and awareness-raising activities. Civil society engagement and youth empowerment are necessary to ensure that young people have the skills and confidence required to make positive choices and become active contributors to society.

Last but not least, the OSCE empowers women in the energy sector in Central Asia and Afghanistan through a ground-breaking project, which provides extensive training and mentoring opportunities. The recent provision of clean energy technologies (such as solar parabolic cookers and mini-solar power stations) to women in mountainous areas of Tajikistan is an outstanding example of how we can support community resilience, energy security and gender equality, while also having a positive impact on the environment.

Building on these and many other tangible achievements of this Organisation, Italy looks forward to our important discussions within this Forum and to working together to drive the agenda of the economic and environmental dimension forward.

Thank you