

**20th WINTER MEETING
OF THE OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

**General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and
Environment**

25 February 2021

**Statement of Amb. Florian Raunig,
Chair of the Economic and Environmental Committee
Permanent Representative of Austria to the OSCE**

Madam Chairperson, Excellences, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great privilege for me to present you an outlook of the work of the Economic and Environmental Committee for the year 2021. I would like to thank the Swedish Chairpersonship for entrusting me to chair the Economic and Environmental Committee and further continue and proceed with our systematic and impactful work.

I also would like to present my sincere thanks to the Albanian Chairmanship for their devoted work during the last year and for the meaningful outcomes in the Economic and Environmental Dimension.

In 2020, despite the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, we have successfully continued our work aimed at strengthening the Second Dimension. Our efforts also led to the adoption of an important Ministerial Council decision on “Preventing and Combatting Corruption through digitalization and increased transparency”. Hence, we can look back towards a very fruitful year.

Madam Chair,

Please allow me to shortly present the overall frame of the Second Dimension in 2021 and the distribution of sectors and topics amongst the three main fora of the Dimension:

1) The **Economic and Environmental Forum** will be devoted **to the Chairpersonship’s priority of economic empowerment and increased economic participation of women**. The First and Second Preparatory Meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum will provide a platform for discussion on how OSCE participating States can promote women’s equal economic participation and opportunities. At the concluding Meeting in Prague, we will consider

the recommendations, best practices and substantive ideas, generated during the Forum's process.

2) As for the choice of the themes addressed in the **Economic and Environmental Committee** (EEC) meetings, let me highlight that the Swedish Chairpersonship and the EEC Chair agreed to concentrate on **environmental topics** that we consider as imminent and pressing. The 2021 Work programme has been closely consulted with the participating States and will have a close look into and analyse security issues in connection with climate, biodiversity, sustainable economic development, sustainable economic recovery after the COVID-19-pandemic, good environmental governance and hazardous waste management.

This will deepen our understanding regarding possible ways of coping with the multiple challenges lying ahead of us. Additionally, practical examples of result orientated programmes and projects will be provided by the OSCE Field Operations.

The Committee's thematic agenda has been chosen with the aim to address issues of common concern that could then be translated into a political commitment. In this regard, the majority of thematic meetings will focus on the environmental issues I just mentioned before, around which, we believe, a possible Ministerial Council deliverable could be built.

3) Finally, the **Economic and Environmental Implementation Meeting** will devote its attention to the topic of **corruption**. Corruption represents an imminent and pressing threat to security. Thanks to last year's deliverable at the Tirana Ministerial Council, we were able to advance a big step together in our common commitment and efforts to combat this dangerous phenomenon.

I am confident that with this thematic distribution – the Forum concentrating on economic issues, the Implementation Meeting on corruption and the Committee on environment – a sound balance between the economic and environmental aspects of our dimension has been found.

Environment and economy are closely interlinked – and even more in our present time: We can only successfully cope with the disastrous effects of both, the COVID pandemic and the destruction of environment, by closely connecting mid-term economic recovery measures with the long-term perspective of protecting the environment, including the climate. Additionally, corruption continues to be a serious threat to our common efforts, not least by multiplying already existing negative impacts.

Hence, I am convinced, that the Swedish Chairpersonship chose a well thought, timely and up-

to-date approach by closely combining the three main pillars of the of the Second Dimension.

In addition, I would like to stress that the OSCE's economic and environmental activities have the potential to foster dialogue, building confidence and trust, diminishing tensions and promoting good neighbourly relationships. In this regard, I am confident that enhancing our understanding and co-operation on economic and environmental issues will help to strengthen security, peace and prosperity in the OSCE region. This is of utmost importance in particular during and in the aftermath of the current pandemic - a phenomenon, so far unknown for us

Madam Chairperson,

We repeatedly evoke the Second Dimension's potential, as I just did right now. However, we also agree that this potential is not used to the extent it could be. It is exactly here, where I see an increasingly important and challenging line of action for the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE.

Parliamentarians, having got a mandate from their people, are the appropriate body to overcome lack of knowledge and mistrust in order to prepare the ground for mutual understanding. By surmounting existing mental, emotional and political barriers, the Parliamentary Assembly has the potential to anchor **transboundary** economic and environmental co-operation.

Hence, let me invite all of you, to mobilise our forces, sense of co-operation, ability to compromise and over all, political will, in order to awaken this potential.

Let me reassure you, that my team and I personally will make every effort with the view to achieving practical results in a co-operative and productive spirit. We are committed to closely co-operate with the Parliamentary Assembly, the Swedish 2021 Chairpersonship and the Office of the Coordinator on Economic and Environmental Affairs of the OSCE in order to confront the manifold challenges lying ahead.

Madame Chair, distinguished Parliamentarians,

I thank you for your attention.