



Statement by Mr Guðni Bragason, Permanent Representative of Iceland, at the 2nd Preparatory Meeting, 27th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, held in Bratislava 27 – 28 May 2019.

Mr Chairman.

I like to thank you for inviting to this 2nd preparatory meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum, under the headline of “*Promoting economic progress and security in the OSCE area through energy cooperation, new technologies, good governance and connectivity in the digital era.*”

Sustainable economic development is essential for strengthening the security in the OSCE area. Needless to say, environmental considerations are now an integral part of the approach to sustainable economic development.

Energy security is important for the overall security of every nation, and every nation is entitled to make use of its possibilities and guard its interests in this respect. Doing so we need to have broad perspective and to have the welfare of future generations in mind, not only short term gains.

We have welcomed the Chair’s emphasis on energy cooperation. In this context we follow the guidance of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Sustainable Development Goals, especially the one number seven “*to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all*”.

Allow me to use this opportunity to welcome the inclusion of the SDGs as a topic in the up-coming Secretary General’s Security Days.

In order to achieve the SDG 7 we need to consider access to energy, energy development and energy efficiency. This calls for more financing, stronger policy commitments, partnerships and active involvement of the private sector.

Iceland especially welcomes the emphasis on the use of clean and renewable energy, and increased awareness about the technical feasibility and economic benefits of geothermal energy. We call for an increased energy efficiency and the increased use of renewable energy in the overall energy consumption, and especially its use on the level of communities and districts, with emphasis on people and how to improve their economic situation and quality of life.

An important factor contributing to the feasibility of geothermal energy is the direct use opportunities. It is less costly, had less technical barriers and visible social benefits. Using geothermal energy is very practical on the community level for district heating, domestic hot water and suitable industrial uses, such as greenhouses, cooling systems and aquaculture, and food production and preservation in general.

Allow me to name an example from one participating state, Kazakstan. According to geological research geothermal capacity is under 40% of the country's surface, and the temperature ranges from 70 to 160 degrees on Celcius. This means huge a potential for Kazakstan to increase the part of renewable energy in the overall energy consumption.

In developing such potential partnerships between various players is essential, both from the official sector and private one, research, universities and multinational organizations.

Participation of private companies and capital is essential. It is well established fact that the Agenda 2030 can not be realized without an active involvement of the private sector. Official financial resources are not sufficient.

There are considerable benefits involved for private engineering and energy companies. In some countries we are now seeing impressive investments are taking place involving the building of whole cities with district heating derived from geothermal energy. And thus improving the air quality and the quality of life for millions.

Mr Chairman.

We support the 2019 Work Plan of the OSCE Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA), including “...targeted technical assistance, capacity-building and sharing of expertise, ...”.

In line with this, - and Human Capital Development -, we are in the coming fall are planning a second geothermal study visit by energy experts from some OSCE countries to Iceland in cooperation with the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities. It is our hope that such a visit will promote the utilization of renewable energy in the OSCE-area and thus contribute to sustainable development and Agenda 2030.

We welcome the emphasis on the Slovak Chairmanship on multilateral cooperation and like to mention in that context IRENA and the Global Geothermal Alliance, SE4All and the World Bank.

Mr Chairman.

Hopefully, our work will lead to a strong Ministerial Declaration on the importance of sustainable economic development for strengthening the security in the OSCE area.

Thank you.