



Address of Ambassador Guðni Bragason, Permanent Representative of Iceland, at the 28th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, 10–11 September 2020 in Prague.

Mr Chairman.

Allow me to thank you for convening the Concluding Meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum, and also thank our Czech hosts for their hospitality. It is appropriate that the first major gathering of the OSCE outside Vienna for several months takes place in the beautiful city of Prague.

I like to reiterate our support of the focus of the Albanian Chairmanship on “Promoting security, stability and economic growth in the OSCE area by preventing and combating corruption through innovation, increased transparency and digitalization, and by fostering good environmental governance aiming at achieving sustainable development and protecting the environment”.

We welcome this as a continuation of previous work within the second dimension, as well as OSCE’s work in general on anti-corruption and anti-terrorism, and it is thus a contribution to the comprehensive security concept of the OSCE.

We also share the ambition of the Albanian Chairmanship of bringing draft decisions on these issues to the Ministerial Council in December.

Iceland especially welcomes the discussions on the environment, giving us the opportunity to highlight and bring into the OSCE discussion the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Combatting corruption.

Iceland whole-heartedly supports the Chair’s ambition to have a Ministerial Council deliverable on “Promoting security, stability and economic growth in the

OSCE area by preventing and combating corruption through innovation, increased transparency and digitalization”.

Corruption and criminal financial activities are a problem for all countries in one form or another. In the world of contemporary high finance, the use of modern and digital technologies are essential in order to be successful in fighting illegal activities. Good governance and transparency are also key concepts in this respect.

I also would like to draw attention to the fact that the legal framework for anti-corruption measures is of paramount importance, if authorities are to be successful in their endeavors. Allow me to mention that Icelandic Authorities have made a determined effort in that respect.

In the last months Icelandic Authorities have cooperated intensively with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in Paris on money laundering issues and made a high level political commitment on strengthening the effectiveness of our Anti-Money Laundering/Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) regime and addressed related technical aspects.

This resulted in the Parliament, Althingi, passing a new legislation on measures against money laundering and the financing of terrorism and the registration of the real owners of firms. The money laundering laws deal with the definition of individuals in risk groups because of political functions and connections, restrictions on unidentified use of pre-paid cards, registration of bank accounts and private bank vaults and the monitoring of non-profit organizations.

These laws give us a good basis for tracing and identifying the culprits of illegal activities, such as in the utilization of natural resources.

The Environment.

Environmental crimes take on many forms and affect the lives and livelihoods of millions of people. It is a trans-national problem and the only way to counter this is through multi-national cooperation.

Since environmental damage and pollution does not stop at borders, global policies are needed to supplement national agendas and policies. Some of these multi-national actions are listed in the Concept Paper, such as the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). This Convention is of especial importance to us, since ultimately the pollutants end up in the food chain,

- in the fish stocks in the oceans and in the products of fish-farming, which are so important for some OSCE Asian partners.

Allow me to take an example close to home, and I welcome the reference of the US Under Secretary Keith Krach to this issues earlier, which is that one of the greatest threat to the fish stocks is illegal fishing, depleting the fish stocks as a natural resource and damaging environment as well. Now, through the international agreement to prevent illegal, unreported and unregulated fisheries (IUU) a legal basis has been provided, and effective technological tool put in place through the Global Record of Fishing Vessels, making use of digital technology and the concept of transparency.

When it comes to abusing the environment, the nature of the problem is the same all over, and the methods and technology to solve it as well.

Mr Chairman.

Concern for the environment is something all nations have in common. The OSCE has, as other multi-national organizations, a role to play in this, and a Ministerial Council Decision on the “Protection of the Environment and the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources” would be of great importance for our endeavors.

Thank you.