



**Statement of Minister Plenipotentiary Mr. Gudni Bragason, Permanent Representative of Iceland at the 27th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, Prague, 11-13 September 2019.**

Mr Chairman.

Let me begin by thanking our Czech hosts and the Slovak Chair for the invitation to this concluding 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”*.

I also like to thank the Slovak Chair for the Food-for-Thought paper, *“The Way to Slovakia”*. Needless to say, we support the emphasis of the Slovak Chair within the Economic and Environmental Dimension on digitalization and energy, and appreciate the comprehensive and thought-provoking discussions throughout the year. This will hopefully culminate in a clear signal from the Ministerial Conference in Slovakia at the end of the year on the importance of sustainable economic development in the field of digitalization and energy for strengthening the security in the OSCE area.

In this respect we all benefit from the successful work of the previous Italian Chairmanship, and the guidance we have from the two EED Declarations on digitalization of the Ministerial Meeting in Milano.

The energy chapter in the “Food-for-Thought” paper makes an impressive reading in many ways. It demonstrates the foresight of our predecessors who wrote the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, later bringing into the discussion on renewable energy sources and in Kiew in 2013 a commitment to improve the environmental footprint for energy related activities, good governance in the energy sector, energy efficiency and new technologies.

Energy security is essential to the comprehensive security mosaic of the OSCE. We need, however, to have a broad perspective and be forward-looking. 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”*, give us a guidance in this respect. We need to have the welfare of future generations in mind, not only short term gains.

We call for an increase in the use of clean and renewable energy in the overall energy consumption, and for our part, the awareness of the technical feasibility and economic benefits of geothermal energy, with emphasis on its use on the level of communities and districts.

We support the Food-for-Thought paper's suggestions of topics to be included in a possible Ministerial Council outcome in Slovakia. To name but few issues: We advocate more partnerships between the public and the private sector, research and development institutions and Academia, as well as partnerships with multilateral organizations, both for technical know-how and for financing, such as with the Sustainable Energy for all Agency, based in Vienna, the IRENA, the Global Geothermal Alliance, with at least 11 OSCE countries as member states, and the World Bank.

We need to consider aspects like access to energy, energy development and energy efficiency. This calls for more financing, stronger policy commitments and active involvement of the private sector, operating in a healthy business and sound governance climate. Participation of private companies and capital is essential. It is a 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 other renewable sources. And thus improving the air quality and the quality of life for millions.

Energy efficiency and increased use of renewable energy will reduce carbon emissions and the environmental footprint of energy productions. This is important in fighting negative impact of climate change, but it is also a sound business.

Finally, Mr Chairman.

I like to add to this the importance of making determined efforts to strengthen the participation of women in the decision-making in these fields and the economy as a whole. I am convinced that our work will lead to strong Ministerial Declarations on the importance of sustainable economic development for strengthening the security in the OSCE area.

Thank you.