



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

**22<sup>nd</sup> OSCE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM**

**“Responding to environmental challenges with a view to promoting co-operation and security in the OSCE area”**

**CONCLUDING MEETING**

**Prague, 10 September 2014**

**Welcoming Remarks**

**Secretary General Lamberto Zannier**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to join our host and the Swiss Chairmanship in welcoming you to this Concluding Meeting of the 22<sup>nd</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum. I am very pleased to see so many high-level representatives of the OSCE participating States, Partners for Co-operation, and of various international, regional and non-governmental organizations, as well as experts from academia and the private sector.

This year, within the framework of this Forum, we have focused our discussion on addressing environmental challenges with a strong focus on managing natural disasters in the OSCE area and how the OSCE can best support international efforts in reducing disaster risks. In May, the devastating floods in South-Eastern Europe underscored that this topic warrants our shared attention. Confronted with this catastrophic event, the OSCE field operations in Serbia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina took immediate action in assisting the flood victims. Even though this support was modest given the scale of the problem, it was heartening to see that the Organisation could respond quickly to unexpected challenges of this sort.

As an organization, which deals with security in a comprehensive and inclusive manner, the OSCE is well placed to contribute to international processes that aim to address global challenges, including the post-2015 development agenda and the climate change negotiations. *[We look forward to hearing more about the current and future developments in these areas from this morning’s keynote speakers, Her Excellency Margareta Wahlström, UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction; and Professor Thomas Stocker, Co-Chair of Working Group I of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.]* Our Organization can have a

contributing role and should focus on areas where it can bring added value and offer relevant expertise. I would like to mention just some of the areas where I believe the OSCE has proven its strength:

- We are a well-established platform for multi-level and multi-stakeholder dialogue that is well placed to foster co-operation, exchange of information and sharing good practices on issue affecting our common security, including disaster risk reduction.
- Because of our comprehensive security mandate, we can address disaster risks from a cross-dimensional perspective, making best use of available expertise and well-established partnership relations within each security dimension.
- Thanks to our field operations we can work closely with national stakeholders while our network of Aarhus Centres enables us to promote community-based activities.
- Finally, our partnership in the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) fosters cross-border co-operation while ensuring effective co-ordination and co-operation with other international actors.

Finding successful solutions to environmental security challenges requires engaging all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, practitioners, academic experts and the private sector. In July, together with the Swiss Chairmanship, we organized an OSCE Security Days conference on Water in an effort to bring new perspectives into OSCE debates on environmental security. The discussions highlighted the link between climate change and water-related disasters such as floods and droughts and confirmed the need for strengthening water diplomacy. They also brought forward a number of practical recommendations, for instance raising the profile of water on the political agenda, development of a toolkit for water diplomacy to categorize different types of water conflicts and identify appropriate solutions, strategies and tools, establishing regular regional trainings at the OSCE Academy in Bishkek or enhancing public participation through sub-regional and cross-regional projects.

I believe that in view of the forthcoming Ministerial Council, this Forum will offer useful platform for discussion that will help us identify concrete roles for the OSCE in disaster risk reduction efforts. It could also contribute to a larger debate on the strategic orientation of the economic and environmental dimension, which is an important element in the Organisation-wide discussion leading up to the 40th Anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act next year.

Before closing, let me once again stress how much we appreciate the co-operation and partnerships we have built in disaster risk reduction with a number of international organizations, including in the framework of the Environment and Security Initiative

(ENVSEC). These partnerships help us to ensure synergy of efforts and reinforce our action based on respective mandates and capabilities. Today's Review Session, where our colleagues from UNDP will present their report on the OSCE's implementation of commitments in disaster risk reduction, is an example of such close co-operation.

Thank you, and I look forward to productive discussion over the next days.