



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

EF.FR/3/06
22 May 2006

ENGLISH only

Conference Services

Please find attached the power point presentation by Ambassador Vladimir Pryakhin, Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan, delivered to Session V (*The link between transport and the environment: the role of Aarhus Centres; transport of dangerous goods and energy resources and their environmental impact*), of the 14th OSCE Economic Forum, Part 2, Prague, 22-24 May 2006.

"Transportation in the OSCE area: Secure transportation networks and transport development to enhance regional economic co-operation and stability"

Environmental Aspects of Infrastructural and Transport Development within the Framework of National Security
The Case of Aarhus Centers

Presentation of Ambassador V.Pryakhin,
Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan
14th OSCE Economic Forum – Part 2
Prague, 22-24 May 2006

OSCE Office in Yerevan



Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear colleagues,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be amongst you and to share some ideas on environmental aspects as an **indispensable part** of infrastructural and transport development within the framework of safety, security and stability. I would also like to expand upon the role of Aarhus Centers in this context.

- The 2nd preparatory seminar identified a number of follow-up needs, including the need for sustainability in the development of infrastructure and transport, with an incorporation of environmental considerations;
- In this way, the OSCE-UNDP-UNEP Environment and Security Initiative has been stressed as a potential vehicle for OSCE participating States to address the challenges related to the environmental sustainability of transport;
- This Forum offers an opportunity to assess cases where the OSCE has been especially effective in integrating environmental considerations with broader considerations of infrastructural transport development and security.
- One of those instruments could be the network of Public Environmental Information Centers, established to promote the Aarhus Convention.

- OSCE pursues a concept of a common, comprehensive and indivisible security space, as articulated in the OSCE Istanbul Summit of 1999.
- Concept of security itself is comprised of elements of economic, environmental and social development.
- This linkage is most indicative of the recognition of environmental aspects of transport development within a framework of national security.

The role of the OSCE in enhancing regional dialogue, co-operation and stability can be seen in three key areas:

- **First**, the environmental aspects of transport can serve to bolster the OSCE role as a tool for early warning, conflict resolution and post conflict rehabilitation.
- **Second**, it can be leveraged for greater stability and security in both OSCE states and along the European periphery.
- **And thirdly**, the OSCE can be instrumental in a capacity-building effort by engaging civil society in tackling the environmental challenges of transport security.

1. Conflict Early Warning and Management

- The OSCE potential stems from the recognition of the linkage between environment and conflict, where environmental deficiencies trigger conflict, act as multipliers that aggravate core causes of conflict, and shape the nature of conflict.
- The linkage between security and environmental factors demonstrates an inverse relationship whereby the degradation or depletion of environmental resources leads to a decrease of deterioration of security.
- To date, the environmental aspects of transport development have only rarely adopted a trans-national, international or even region-based approach.

- There is a shared sense of collective security between the environment and transport development where the traditional concepts of national security, defined largely by nation states locked in competition over cooperation, no longer apply in this sense.
- Thus, the environmental “pathways to peace” that are rooted in the shared needs of the environmental aspects of transport development can be leveraged to bolster a conflict early warning and management effort.

2. Enhancing Stability and Security

- Potential for utilizing the environmental aspects of transport development and security stems from the fact that there is a direct link between environmental and economic security.
- Economic growth is directly dependent on the environment and on “environmental capital”.
- The concept of environmental capital refers to a country’s core components: arable land, water, forests, fisheries and natural resources.
- Moreover, any damage to the environment can also diminish the development of transport as a value-added good by curbing economic growth. Therefore, the consideration and proper planning for environmental security are key prerequisites for sustainable long term economic growth.

3. Empowering Civil Society

- A third important avenue for enhancing regional economic co-operation and stability is the empowerment of civil society in the environmental aspects of transport development.
- Engaging civil society involves an integration of non-governmental organizations, public groups, academics and the media in a collective effort targeting the environmental aspects of transport security. The crucial point is to craft an approach to transform civil society into stakeholders in the environmental aspects of transport development.
- **And it is the OSCE, and OSCE field presences, that are best placed to adopt this stakeholder approach.**

The Aarhus Centers Network

- The OSCE’s potential for capacity-building in meeting the environmental challenges of transport development can be seen in the role of Public Environmental Information Centers (Aarhus Centers).
- The Aarhus Centers, supported by the OSCE in various countries, can be instrumental at least in the following significant areas:
 1. raising environmental awareness,
 2. promoting dialogue, and
 3. facilitating strategic and environmental impact assessments of new transport projects.

Promoting Dialogue

- The bridging role of the Aarhus Centers stems in large part from a role as a complement, and not competitor, to the existing official channels and because the information is crafted to be more easily accessible or user-friendly for the public.
- In this context, the primary functions center on providing a forum for dialogue and interaction between the government and civil society, and on providing public access to relevant environmental information.

Facilitating Environmental Impact Assessments

- The Aarhus Centers also contribute to the course of open government and transparent decision-making. By fostering a climate of transparency in environmental affairs and good governance, the Aarhus Centers also encourage the facilitation of **environmental impact assessments** in the development of transport security.
- The implementation of the Aarhus Convention is “one of the keys to finding coordinated solutions for environmental problems through awareness raising, access to information and public participation in decision-making processes,” and therefore, **“beneficial to the civil society, the environment and the economy.”**

I would like to present a significant and revealing case involving a transportation project in Armenia, which emerged as an important demonstration of a constructive dialogue between governmental and public stakeholders. This case also confirms the role that Aarhus Centers may play in the decision making process.

Specifically, I am referring to a highway project in the southern Syunik district of Armenia, which was initially planned to cross the Shikahogh Nature Reserve, an environmentally sensitive area.

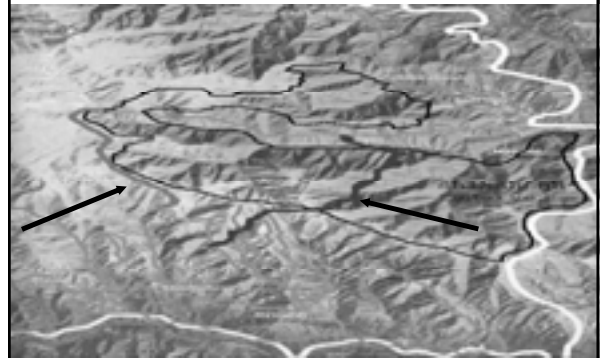
The "Shikahogh" reserve serves as a habitat for about 1100 species of plants, 70 of which have been registered in the Red Book of Armenia and another 18 - in the Red Book of the CIS territory. Shikahogh is rich with virgin forests and natural heritage. Any threat to the protection and conservation of the Shikahogh Reserve would have inevitably resulted in the mass destruction of these species.

However, RA President Kocharyan intervened in the highway construction project and approved a new plan to bypass the Nature Reserve. The decision to protect the Nature Reserve was adopted after environmental activists, members of parliament, and international organizations, among them to OSCE and UNDP/UNEP, appealed to the authorities to consider alternative options, avoiding the protected area.

The public awareness campaign for an environmentally sound highway project initiated by the Environmental Public Alliance of Armenian NGOs led by the Aarhus Centre and supported by international organizations led to a constructive dialog between civil society and governmental stakeholders.

Thus, a solution was found considering economic, technical and environmental interests.

Planned road - in red
Alternative - in blue



Aarhus Centers Network in Armenia

