

**Permanent Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the OSCE and other
International Organizations**

First Preparatory Meeting of the 23rd OSCE Economic and Environmental
Forum “Water governance in the OSCE area – increasing security and stability
through co-operation”

Vienna, 26-27 January 2015

Opening address of the OSCE Permanent Council Chairperson,
Ambassador Vuk Žugić

Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Chairmanship in Office of Serbia, it is my sincere pleasure to welcome all of you to the First Preparatory Meeting of the 23rd OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum.

I would like to thank the Office of the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities for their efforts in organizing the first major OSCE event in 2015, dedicated to the topic “Water governance in the OSCE area – increasing of security and stability through co-operation”.

I warmly welcome Ms. Stana Bozovic, State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia, Prof. John Anthony Allan, Professor of Geography from the King’s College in London and Dr. Mohamed Ait Kadi, from the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Fisheries of the Kingdom of Morocco and thank them for addressing us here today, as key-note speakers.

I would also like to welcome all representatives of the OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation, high-level officials from ministries and agencies, representatives of international, regional and non-governmental organizations as well as experts from the business sector and academia and last,

but not least, the officers from the OSCE field Missions in charge of economic and environmental activities.

We are pleased to have you all here and we hope that we will have fruitful discussions on this important matter at hand. With regard to this, and in light of the motto of the Forum – “water is fundamental, water unites, and water connects”, I encourage all participants to actively and freely engage in the deliberations and to provide their views and ideas on various aspects of Water Governance in the OSCE area.

During this year, we will strive to determine and specify how better water governance can contribute to the increase of security and stability in the OSCE. As we have seen last year, the cooperation between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia during the devastating floods in the Western Balkans, proved to be a good example on how transboundary co-operation can be of importance in addressing negative impacts of disasters. Our vision is to promote dialogue on good water governance within the OSCE area, through the sharing of best practices and lessons learned, and raise awareness of the importance of water governance at all levels – transboundary, national, and local. With this regard, we would like to point out that, within the OSCE area, there is a number of transboundary water agreements which can serve as excellent examples on how to deal with contemporary and future challenges.

We have envisaged that during the First Preparatory Meeting we will have an opportunity to learn about the very principles and basics of Water Governance. During the course of our discussions, we will deliberate on improving integrated and cross-sectorial approaches to water resource management, fostering food and energy security, protecting ecosystems and increasing water productivity, reducing pollution and increasing collection, treatment and re-use of water. We will also consider the opportunities for providing mutual assistance and exchange of information, particularly in the area of sharing of technology and know-how.

We believe that one of the tasks of the country chairing the OSCE is to promote the broader capacity of economic and environmental dimension in strengthening the synergy between OSCE’s dimensions and its potential in contributing to the general OSCE’s agenda. Even though there has certainly been some positive progress in this Dimension, we consider that the second dimension of the OSCE

remains underutilized, despite its essential role in the comprehensive approach to security. Having in mind that the OSCE is, first and foremost, a security oriented organization, there needs to be a link to security in our discussions, and I hope that in the next two days we will hear concrete examples on how the OSCE can contribute in this ever more important matter. Once again, I wish to reiterate our position that the ongoing “Helsinki +40” process is also a very good opportunity to tackle this issue.

The OSCE Chairmanship of Serbia will continue to support the strengthening of this dimension in order to provide the participating States with assistance and expertise needed for responding to the new economic and environmental challenges.

I thank you all for your attention and wish you a successful and productive Meeting.