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**Contribution of Dr. Samir Rizvo, Assistant Minister for International Relations and European Integration, Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to the 22<sup>nd</sup> OSCE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM  
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Session I: Flooding disaster in South Eastern Europe –Lessons learned and the role of the OSCE**

At the outset, we wish to express our gratitude for raising the issue of the flooding disaster in South Eastern Europe as a topic of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Economic and Environmental Forum. Responding to environmental challenges with a view to promoting co-operation and security in the OSCE area has become important for Bosnia and Herzegovina more than ever after experiencing recent floods and its consequences.

Also, we would like to use this opportunity to thank once more the OSCE and all delegations, for their kind and heartfelt interventions and the words of condolences and sympathies for the victims and their families. In this vein, we express our utmost appreciation to all the countries who generously offered their support in overcoming the harsh consequences of the natural disaster that hit our country.

The amount of the three months' average of rain has fallen in the some regions of the country in just three days and have caused the worst floods since the rainfall measurements began, 120 years ago.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, floods severely damaged a third of the country's surface and some 1.2 million people were seriously impacted. This led to the biggest exodus of the population since the end of the conflict in 1990s. Authorities have declared a state of emergency. Record-high and spacious floods and about 2.000 massive landslides have swept away people, homes and roads, electricity, water and sewage infrastructure, telecommunications infrastructure, households, factories, warehouses and stored goods, agricultural fields and livestock, thus leaving thousands of people literally without any property and vanishing numerous villages and settlements from the maps. Around 90,000 persons were temporarily displaced from their homes and more than 40,000 took extended refuge in public or private shelters or moved in temporarily with relatives or friends. More than 100.000 houses and other buildings are no longer usable and the road infrastructure is badly damaged. About a quarter of Bosnia and Herzegovina's four million inhabitants were without clean water.

The final death toll was at least 21, but in floods which affected Bosnia and Herzegovina again in August this year additional 3 dead were confirmed.

Additional security threat caused by the floods and landslides was movement of some of minefields left over from the war. Nearly 120.000 unexploded landmines remained in more than 9.400 carefully marked minefields, but the weather has dislodged warning signs and in many cases loosened the mines themselves. It is much wider threat because there are concerns that unexploded devices could be carried by flood waters downstream to Sava and Danube, thus creating an international problem.

In sum, the total economic impact of the disaster (destruction or severe damage to property, infrastructure and goods as well the effects of destruction on livelihoods, incomes and production, among other factors) is estimated to have reached 2 Billion Euros. Most of it impacted the private sector; families, small, medium and large businesses, and agricultural producers, including an undefined number of vulnerable sectors of the population. The floods are estimated to have caused the equivalent of

nearly 15 percent of GDP in damages and losses in 2014. The hardest hit economic sectors were agriculture, transport and productive activities. As a result, the economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina is expected to contract by 0.7 percent in 2014. The floods are expected to put further strain on public finances, raising the fiscal deficit from a baseline of 2 percent of GDP to 4.5 percent in 2014. The trade deficit is likely to come under pressure, widening to 34 percent of GDP in 2014 while the current account deficit is projected to increase from the baseline 7.8 to 9.7 percent of GDP in 2014.

In agricultural sector approximately 70,000 hectares of arable and planted land were affected. Crops were impacted at various stages of development and 25,000 households have now seen their income and livelihoods permanently altered.

The floods occurred at a very critical time in the agricultural calendar. The crop sub-sector bears the bulk of the damages and losses whereas the livestock sub-sector is the second most affected. Fishery and forestry have been impacted to a lesser extent.

With regards to the education sector it is estimated that 60,000 children have been directly affected. The education sector infrastructure suffered damages to 121 institutions.

The direct damages to health facilities have been limited and owing to a rapid response by health authorities to redirect staff and patients to unaffected facilities. Interruption of health services was both localized and minimal. However, the effects of the overall damages and losses in livelihoods and employment will translate into considerable losses to the Health Insurance Funds, as affected populations and enterprises will be limited in their ability to pay the required premiums.

The flooding of May disrupted the provision of all public services in the majority of the municipalities affected, with a number suffering near-total devastation of service infrastructure and facilities. A total of 210,000 citizens were affected by the partial or complete suspension of public services.

The housing sector suffered severe damages associated both with the vast extension of the flooding, covering both urban and rural housing, as well as destruction of houses by landslides. Associated with the destruction, or damage, to the houses was the destruction of household goods and valuable items such as documentation, family heirlooms and other valuables difficult to price. Over 43,000 houses and flats were flooded and 1,952 houses were destroyed due to landslides.

The impact of the floods on the energy sector was registered through damages to generation facilities, transmission and distribution networks, as well as coalmines that supply the thermal electricity generating plants. As soon as heavy rains started on May 14, utility companies went into crisis mode and, as a preventive measure, disconnected vulnerable transmission and distribution lines and substations. More than 100,000 users in the country were disconnected as a result. As a direct consequence of floods a number of facilities were damaged or destroyed. Electricity transmission and utility companies progressively re-established electricity supply where possible; however some areas were left without power either because the equipment was heavily damaged, and/or the flood level of the area and landslides created a safety hazard.

The floods have caused severe damages to commercial and industrial, equipment and machinery, raw materials and finished products across the country. More than 3,000 people had lost their jobs. 13,500 people are at high risk of job loss and 50,000 are at low to medium risk.

The damages in transportation and communications sector were also high.

Access to clean water due to the intensive rains and floods was compromised by the limited damages suffered by the water utilities, serving some 60% of the country's population. Nonetheless, the restoration of basic water supply and sanitation services in flood affected area was relatively quick, and in the majority of affected communities it

took under one week to bring water supply systems back into operation, and around two weeks to restore water supply quality to drinking water standards.

It will take a long path to recover from this catastrophe and to rebuild thousands of homes and public buildings, along with belonging infrastructure, and above all, to return the people to normal life cycles.

With stirring emotions we observed the generosity of a large number of the countries from the region, Europe and beyond, sending the most needed relief and expressing its devotion and determination to supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina in the immediate aftermath of this catastrophe. Here, we will not enumerate individually the countries which rendered aid, as there is hardly any country in our realm, not attaching to the international action of helping Bosnia and Heryegovina.

Notably, OSCE stays at the forefront of the international actions. We hail the earliest action by OSCE Secretary General amounting 30.000 Euro from Organization's Charity Fund for immediate help to the most affected. It was timely and, above all, stimulant example of assistance for others to offer their support to the country. In addition, the role of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina on the ground, in helping to alleviating the harsh consequences is enormous. Since Bosnia and Herzegovina, like any other country, has limited capacities to cope with such emergency situation it was of outmost importance to coordinate assistance from abroad including communication with foreign and international authorities, admission of help and its deployment. From that time experience we realised that establishment of procedures and institutional capacities for coordination in such situations should be priority, not only nationally, but also internationally, where the role of OSCE could be crucial.

As Bosnia and Herzegovina faces its most severe challenges in its recent history we rely on persistent and enduring support from international community in overcoming the terrifying and dire consequences of this unprecedented centennial disaster. Under the motto "Rebuilding together", the European Commission hosted a donors' conference in Brussels on 16 July to mobilise further support to Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the aftermath of the floods. The aim of the conference was to collect pledges from donors for the countries' recovery. The conference's aims was also to contribute to stepping up co-operation over floods and natural disasters in the region, as well as operational coordination. The conference confirmed solidarity with the country by collecting pledges of aid of 809.2 million euros.

Thank you for your attention!

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