



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The Security Implications of Climate Change in the OSCE Region

Opening Remarks

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Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Being the last speaker in the opening remarks' session is always a challenging task: We have already heard from my distinguished colleagues why the OSCE is organizing this conference, why is relevant to do it now, and what do we expect from the discussions in Bucharest.

As my office has been engaged in the organization of the conference at the request of the Chairmanship, let me review with you the agenda.

First of all, I am delighted to see that we have managed to attract speakers from different backgrounds, thus enriching the debate during these two days.

I am looking forward to listen to Mr. Spencer's keynote speech, as I am aware that his previous interventions in OSCE fora have never left anyone in the room indifferent.

Indeed, learning from other international organizations, research institutions or academia on activities related to the security implications of climate change is part of the objectives of this conference. But we also want to discuss and introduce activities carried out by the OSCE.

In that regard, my Office is about to start a project, thanks to a generous contribution from Spain, on developing scenarios for different OSCE regions to quantify the security implications of Climate Change. We will go from general to specific, and will evaluate the main policy responses in each of the following sub-regions: Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Arctic, and the Southern Mediterranean.

The study will assess the impact of climate change on natural resources, energy and food availability, and their repercussions. These scenarios will provide another tool for co-operative action and policy recommendations that can, for instance, be implemented by the OSCE field operations or that can be elevated to the Permanent Council.

We are going to do so by teaming up with the European Environmental Agency, which is represented here today, and by looking at the best expertise available on forecast and forward looking studies.

At the same time, my Office continues with the activities of the Environment and Security Initiative, which is looking at ways to include Climate Change in its work program. I am delighted to see Mr. Keiner in the high level panel, both to learn the conclusions of the latest report from the UN Secretary General on Climate Change and its possible security implications, and as the chairperson of the ENVSEC initiative.

The role of the field operations is vital to build up a comprehensive OSCE response. I am eager to listen to Ambassador Tesoriere, who will provide us with an interesting overview of the topic from both a Central Asian and OSCE perspective.

I have recognized in the audience OSCE officers, and I would like to encourage them to speak up and share with us their experiences and difficulties on their day-to-day activities in dealing with such an important topic.

A session of particular importance will be session 3 where you will have the opportunity to listen and debate about the security implications of Climate Change and Energy. I believe this is a really important link.

Many commentators state that the climate crisis is an energy crisis: I agree.

Nobody denies today that Greenhouse Gas emissions are one of the main causes of Global Warming. At the same time, renewable energy sources are a promising solution but we need to consider the specificities of producer, transit and consumer countries in the OSCE region.

The conference organized in Bratislava only 3 months ago on “Strengthening Energy Security in the OSCE area” set the debate on the matter.

Energy Security and Climate Change are two of the priorities of the my Office’s Action Plan. I hope and expect that this conference will help shape and define the activities that my Office shall conduct to assist participating States in these interlinked areas.

I will conclude with a suggestion.... a somehow provocative idea that can be debated over these two days.

The proposal is the following: Shall the OSCE, under the auspices of my Office, have a specific programme dealing with the security implications of Climate Change?

Such a programme would facilitate the co-ordination of efforts from different OSCE field operations and between the OSCE and other international organizations. It would also put the OSCE back on the forefront of a security debate we no longer can ignore.

I am aware that in times of economic crisis and zero budget growth, launching such proposal might be perceived as inappropriate, but as we understand crisis as an opportunity to prioritize, and streamline our activities, in order to become more efficient in what we do, I believe that this is a chance we shall not miss.

Thank you for your attention.