



German Presidency of the European Union

15th Economic and Environmental Forum

Vienna, 23rd January 2007

European Union Closing Statement

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. The first part of the 15th Economic and Environmental Forum, dedicated to the problems of soil degradation and land contamination, has confirmed that environmental security and sustainable development are important issues for all OSCE participating States and Partners for co-operation. The European Union thanks the Spanish Chairmanship, the Secretary General of the OSCE, the Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities and the OSCE staff for having organised this interesting Forum. We are already looking forward to continuing our discussions during the second preparatory conference in Zaragoza, which will focus on water management, and the second part of the Economic and Environmental Forum to be held in Prague.

We are also grateful for the interesting contributions made by the speakers, that highlighted the strategic importance of sound management and protection of soil for our economic development and security. We heard many case studies and learned about best practices and experiences of participating States. The EU took note of numerous proposals of participating States and Partners and welcomes initiatives and concrete steps which could address the most pressing environmental problems. Good governance and transparency are crucial to achieve sustainable development and address adequately our common security concerns. International cooperation is needed, as environmental problems are of a transboundary nature and have global effects.

The EU attaches special importance to the environmental activities carried out by the OSCE field operations. We are pleased that many OSCE Economic and Environmental Officers from the field operations have come to Vienna to take part in the Forum and we would encourage them to continue to be actively involved in the future.

The EU is convinced that economic development must become sustainable if prosperity and security are to be ensured in the 21st Century. Research and development, and environmentally friendly innovations and technologies, are crucial elements in this regard. A transition to sustainable development is one of the biggest challenges that our societies have to face in the coming decades. We believe that the cost of acting now is a lot less than the long-term cost of doing nothing. Meeting this challenge will also require a global effort where international organisations, nation states, business and scientific communities, and in particular the civil society, work hand in hand.

The European Union believes that the OSCE in its Economic and Environmental Dimension can, in close cooperation and coordination with the relevant international organisations and respecting their leading role, contribute to such transition.

We welcome the close cooperation and coordination of the Office of the OSCE Co-ordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities with international organisations, in particular the UNECE, and note with satisfaction that many of their representatives have actively taken part in the Forum. The ENVSEC-initiative is, in our view, an outstanding example of effective cooperation between OSCE and other international organisations.

The EU fully supports the Spanish Chair in stimulating and guiding the dialogue on the role of sustainable development and environmental security for peace and security in the OSCE area and beyond. This is in line with the EU's endeavour to strengthen the emphasis on environmental protection and natural resource management in our overall security approach.

The EU recalls the environmental commitments of the Maastricht Strategy Document. We are ready to discuss the proposals and recommendations for the future work and role of the OSCE resulting from this Forum.

The Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia, EFTA country Norway, a member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.