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Session 2: Economic and Environmental Dimension

“The Role of the OSCE”

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Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to provide you with an overview of the economic and environmental activities of our Office.

The Swiss 2014 OSCE Chairmanship gave a clear **focus for this year’s Economic and Environmental Forum (EEF) process: “Responding to environmental challenges with a view to promoting co-operation and security in the OSCE area”**. Throughout 2014 participating States have discussed together with representatives of OSCE Field Operations and Institutions, as well as with experts from international, regional and non-governmental organizations, the business community and academia **how the OSCE can contribute** to the global efforts to reduce disaster risks.

What were the concrete topics that were addressed? At the First Preparatory Meeting in January in Vienna participants discussed the human, social and economic impacts of natural disasters and assessed how preparedness and prevention can reduce losses. The role of environmental good governance and sustainable management of natural resources were also highlighted. The Second Preparatory Meeting in Montreux in May combined an in-depth discussion of disaster risk reduction, including DRR at local level and cross dimensional impacts of disasters, with hands-on experience of its practical application in case of Switzerland. The Concluding Meeting in Prague underlined the OSCE’s added value in the context of global processes related to disaster risk reduction – the global Disaster Risk Reduction Agenda (Hyogo Framework for Action 2) as well as the Development Agenda (Sustainable Development Goals) and international climate negotiations. One session was specifically devoted to assessing lessons learnt in the wake of the devastating floods in South-Eastern Europe in May this year. The recommendations of the Forum discussions will contribute to the elaboration of a document that, if agreed by pS, will be presented at the Ministerial Council in Basel at the end of the year.

Before I move to the next topic, I would like to mention **a few examples of the OCEEA’s work to help address risks of disasters**: one of them is a project that we have been implementing for the last five years in the South Caucasus to strengthen national and regional capacities in wildfire management; another example is enhancing flood management

capacities in the Dniester River Basin shared by Moldova and Ukraine. We are also taking some first steps in the field of community-based disaster risk reduction through the public environmental information centres - so called Aarhus Centers - that have been established and supported by the OSCE for over a decade. Ecosystem restoration to mitigate floods in two transboundary river basins in Eastern Europe is another new initiative that we are engaged in.

With this I would like to turn to another important area of our work which is **water**.

We have been promoting sustainable water management and transboundary water co-operation at an increasing pace this year and the topic will continue to be one of our priorities in 2015 under the incoming Serbian Chairmanship.

In July 2014, our office co-organised a **Security Days event with the theme "Enhancing security through water diplomacy: The role of the OSCE"**. The keynote was delivered by His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan – as you might know, he was until recently Chairman of the UN Secretary General’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation and is currently the Chairman of the High Level Forum for the Blue Peace Middle East Plan. The Security Day discussions reconfirmed the linkages between water and security: that water can be a potential source of tensions and conflicts, but also a tool for confidence-building and co-operation. The discussions highlighted the importance of water diplomacy as a new entry point for foreign policy to foster bilateral and regional co-operation among States. This event provided a good basis for the 23rd Economic and Environmental Forum in 2015, which will be dedicated to **“Water governance in the OSCE area – increasing security and stability through co-operation”**.

Our Office, including through the Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative will also continue to support bilateral and regional co-operation among countries in the area of water management, like in the Dniester River Basin between Ukraine and Moldova, and on the Kura River between Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Let me at this point add a few words about **climate change** – a topic which was extensively covered in the recent Baku Declaration by the Parliamentary Assembly:

In the OSCE context, the linkages between climate change and security were addressed in the 2007 **Madrid Ministerial Declaration** on Environment and Security. The **OSCE Conference on the security implications of climate change in the OSCE region**, followed in 2009 in Bucharest. From 2010-2013 we organized sub-regional workshops in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, South Eastern Europe and Central Asia to draw **climate change and security scenarios** and identify priority sectors that would be affected by climate change. And, in 2013, we joined forces with the European Commission Instrument for Stability within the framework of the ENVSEC Initiative, to **assess climate change impacts on security** in Central Asia, the South Caucasus and Eastern Europe, identify geographical areas that would be most affected and to develop a transboundary adaptation strategy for the Dniester River Basin. This project is ongoing.

Among the wide range of our activities, I would like to particularly emphasise the **promotion of environmental good governance**. Keeping in mind that the role of an active and well informed civil society that acts as a partner of the government is crucial to reduce environment and security risks, our Office since 2002 has supported the establishment and strengthening of Aarhus Centres in the OSCE area. They are an accessible resource for citizens and governments and work closely with government at all levels. This is how they are able to build a bridge, allowing governments to attract the resources of civil society for effective and participatory environmental governance. Currently, the OSCE supports a network of 56 Aarhus Centres in 14 countries.

Before I turn to our economic activities allow me a few words on our engagement in enhancing **energy security and sustainability** in the OSCE region.

We are currently implementing two Ministerial Council Decisions adopted last year in Kyiv: MC.DEC/5/13 on “Improving the environmental footprint of energy-related activities” and MC.DEC/6/13 on “Protection of energy networks from natural and man-made disasters”, which is linked to this year’s Forum theme.

On the first Decision related to sustainable energy, our main actions to this date took place in the field. Two examples:

Earlier this year, on March 27, our Office co-organized with the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat a seminar on renewable energy in the Mary State Energy Institute of Turkmenistan with the aim of establishing a national Centre of Excellence on Renewable Energy. New projects involving the Centre of Excellence are now being developed.

On June 17, in Dushanbe, a Regional Conference on Energy Cooperation was co-organized with the OSCE Office in Tajikistan. During this Conference, it was proposed to establish an Energy Diplomacy Centre in Tajikistan under the auspices of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and with the support of the OSCE Office in Tajikistan.

When it comes to the second Decision, our first undertaking this year was the organization of the Expert Workshop “Sharing Best Practices to Protect Electricity Networks from Natural Disasters” on July 2, in Vienna. It provided participants with insights on good practices, knowledge and experience from different countries and stakeholders across the entire process of protecting electricity networks from natural disasters.

This event was a good starting point to facilitate discussions and develop strategic and productive relationships for co-operation among participants. Our next activity will be to compile and publish the proceedings of the Workshop, together with some additional inputs from selected experts, in a Handbook of best practices to protect electricity networks from natural disasters.

Ladies and Gentlemen, with this I would like to turn to my last topic, our **economic activities**.

The **Dublin Declaration on Strengthening Good Governance and Combating Corruption, Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism** adopted by the Ministerial Council in 2012 provides the OSCE with a comprehensive mandate to promote well governed, transparent and non-corrupt economies and, in turn, growth, stability and security. Our Office has continued this year to provide assistance to participating States in implementing their commitments in these areas, in particular those related to the UN Convention against Corruption and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Recommendations.

In all our anti-corruption work in 2014, our Office has closely co-operated with the OSCE field presences in organising capacity-building seminars and assisting host governments, at their request, to strengthen the participation of civil society in combating corruption and decision-making processes, particularly related to corruption prevention. Activities in this sphere are a practical contribution towards a more comprehensive implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption and, in particular its Article 13 on “Participation of society”.

I would like to give you a few concrete examples of how we provide this support:

In June 2014 in Tirana, we supported the organisation of a “Regional Expert Seminar on Prevention of Corruption – Main Trends and Examples of Successful Practice in Eastern Europe and Central Asia”. The event was hosted by the Albanian authorities and took place in the framework of the OECD Anti-Corruption Network (ACN) for Eastern Europe and Central Asia. It gathered around 50 senior anti-corruption officials and leading civil society representatives from countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia as well as experts from international organizations.

Our Office has also supported efforts of OSCE field operations to promote and offer training based on the OSCE Handbook on Data Collection in support of Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing National Risk Assessments (NRAs). In partnership with the World Bank, we have rendered components of technical support towards National Risk Assessments in Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro.

As recent as last week, in Tashkent, our Office and the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan, in partnership with the Financial Intelligence Unit of Uzbekistan and the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism (EAG) organised a workshop on a “National Risk Assessment of Money Laundering and Terrorism financing”. Participants discussed best practices of the National Risk Assessment’s implementation in the OSCE region and were introduced to the recently launched Russian version of the OSCE Handbook on Data Collection in Support of Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing, and National Risk Assessments.

This week, in Vienna, our Office in partnership with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing organises a Regional Training on Cross-Border Co-operation against Corruption and Money Laundering for practitioners in the fields of anti-corruption and anti-money laundering. This event aims

at strengthening the capacity of the OSCE participating States (particularly CIS countries) to successfully initiate, investigate and prosecute cases of both corruption and money laundering in which defendants, evidence and assets are located in multiple jurisdictions.

Let me also briefly touch upon some **other activities in the economic field**.

In the area of **transport** our Office's main focus remains on capacity-building and training activities for customs, trade and transport officials as well as private sector representatives. This year, so far we have conducted at the OSCE Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe, two CIS-specific regional workshops on risk management in customs and trade facilitation respectively.

In late November we will organise together with the World Customs Organization a third and final training seminar, again at the premises of the BMSC. This seminar will focus on the usefulness for customs administrations to introduce Authorised Economic Operator or trusted trader programmes. The introduction of such programmes is of high relevance for the region. Both customs agencies and the private sector can benefit from it.

My last point: We are also putting emphasis on integrating a **gender perspective** in our activities.

- In accordance with MC Decision No. 10/11 on **Promoting Equal Opportunity for Women in the Economic Sphere** our Office will continue to support women's economic empowerment and the development of women's entrepreneurial skills. We plan to implement next year a follow-up project to further strengthen women entrepreneurs' professional networks, market access, business management and product development skills in Central Asia and the South Caucasus.
- In the environmental sphere, gender-sensitive policy interventions can contribute to fair sharing of natural resources and maximize social and economic benefits. This is essential to reduce conflict potential at all levels. Together with the Gender Unit, we recently developed a project that focusses on **gender mainstreaming, women empowerment, and conflict prevention in water management in Central Asia and Afghanistan**. The project aims at contributing to conflict prevention and comprehensive security by increasing women's participation and capacities in conflict resolution and water management.

Let me conclude by mentioning that we are aware of the important role Parliamentarians play in the economic and environmental field, in terms of their legislative authority (national legislation, ratification of international legislation); in their ability to create opportunities for civil society to take part in the development and review of national legislation; and in bringing the security perspective to international and global level discussions on thematic issues, particularly through Parliamentary Unions.

Thank you.

