



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

### **22<sup>nd</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum 2<sup>nd</sup> Preparatory Meeting**

#### **Montreux, 19-21 May 2014 EU Closing Remarks**

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The European Union would like to thank the Swiss Chairmanship and the OCEEA for organizing the 2<sup>nd</sup> Preparatory Meeting of the 22<sup>nd</sup> EEF, as well as those who contributed to our discussions.

The EEF meeting fulfilled the purpose of serving as a forum for political dialogue. It provided us with an opportunity to exchange experience and good practices in the area of disaster risk management. We have learned more about activities of various international actors and individual participating States on prevention, preparedness and response to natural disasters.

We have heard how climate change adaptation and reducing the risk of natural disasters are intrinsically linked. We also recognize the cross-dimensional impact on the security of both natural and man-made disasters. The presentations made also clear that various specialised forums work already successfully on these issues. Significant achievements have been made within the EU through Union policies and financial support. We have developed a comprehensive and integrated approach to disaster risk management. These achievements, which have contributed to the implementation of the HFA, can be shared and underpin the new international framework on disaster risk management. The EU and its Member States are committed to play an active and constructive role in the ongoing negotiations with a view to contributing to an ambitious outcome of the post 2015 HFA.

We should therefore bear in mind the specificities of our Organisation, such as the link to security and thus focus on security implications of climate change as well as confidence building potential of adaptation efforts and cooperation on disaster risk management, as well as the geographic scope of our Organisation and thus focus only on relevant risks and vulnerabilities.

We have learned about challenges of the future. Climate change can be a threat multiplier for instability, conflict, and state fragility, leading to migration and displacement, weak governance and geopolitical instability.

We have learned how effective public awareness raising, sharing of information and education on climate change and disaster risks can empower local communities to better prepare, mitigate and respond to natural hazards. Public participation in decision making contributes to strengthening good governance and increasing transparency and accountability. The OSCE could use the work of its field missions and the wide network of Aarhus centres to further promote the access to information on climate change and disaster risks, facilitate public participation in risk management and related natural resource management and contribute to increased capacities of communities on disaster risk reduction. Strong local structures and enhancement of local authorities' capacities are essential to improve planning and resilience of cities and ensure local political commitment and effective implementation of existing legal and policy frameworks.

Environmental emergencies do not respect international borders. It can be expected that neighbouring countries become affected when such an emergency occurs close to borders. Cross-border cooperation is thus essential to prepare for such events and to deal with the aftermath. There are several specialised conventions in place dealing with cross-border environmental issues (such as UNECE Convention on the transboundary effects of industrial accidents, UNECE Aarhus Convention on access to information, public participation in decision making, UNECE Espoo Convention on environmental impact assessment in a transboundary context etc.). The OSCE could further play a role in supporting the participating States, building on this legal framework. Targeted exchange of experience and best practices, enhancing dialogue and cooperation can furthermore contribute to building trust and confidence in the OSCE area.

Finally, as we have already mentioned in our opening statement, we follow in the European Union an approach of mainstreaming / integrating disaster risk prevention and management into relevant EU policies and funds, such as transport and energy, research and innovation, climate change adaptation, water and flood risk management. Similar mainstreaming of disaster risk management into some OSCE

activities within the Second dimension, such as sustainable use of natural resources, security implications of climate change or use of science and technology, is worth considering.

We hope that these issues will be further elaborated at our meeting in Prague and we stand ready to play a constructive and forward-looking part in these discussions.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.