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SITUATIONS OF THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC, AT THE FIRST  
PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE 22nd OSCE ECONOMIC  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM**

Vienna, 27 and 28 January 2014

**Responding to environmental challenges with a view to promoting  
co-operation and security in the OSCE area**

**Session III: Panel Debate – Improving environmental security: How can we reduce  
natural disaster risks?**

Ladies and gentlemen,  
Conference participants,

First of all, on behalf of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic and in my personal capacity, allow me to warmly welcome all those participating in the Forum and to express my deep gratitude to the OSCE for organizing and holding this extremely important event on ecological and environmental issues.

As the population of Kyrgyzstan increases, great pressure is currently being placed on natural ecosystems. This increasing pressure is the result of high levels of poverty, increasing resource use, infrastructural development and demographic growth, exacerbated by poor natural resource management and environmental pollution.

The side effects of the current economic system are major: environmental problems and the exhaustion of natural resources; rising levels of poverty; threats to food and energy security; inequality between individuals and countries; and emergency situations arising from irresponsible natural resource use.

I will now turn to emergency situations in Central Asia and Kyrgyzstan. Like many other countries throughout the world, last year, we bore witness to disasters caused by dangerous environmental phenomena. These led to many human casualties and destroyed economic and social infrastructure, not to mention the negative impact they had on fragile ecosystems. Such disasters have become far more frequent, large-scale, and severe.

In Central Asia in the past ten years alone, landslides, floods and earthquakes have claimed around 2,500 lives and seriously affected another 5.5 million people, or almost 10 per cent of the population of the region.

Landslides and floods are a constant threat to the people and the economy of the region. Over the past 20 years the number of emergencies in Kyrgyzstan alone has risen sixfold, and material damage as a direct result of such events has risen by a factor of 4.5. Many of the emergencies and much of the damage are a result of mudslides and river flooding.

Furthermore, the issue of manmade disasters is extremely worrying.

Over many decades, natural deposits were industrially mined and processed, which led to major environmental pollution as a result of inappropriate mining methods and waste management.

Kyrgyzstan currently has 92 facilities containing toxic and radioactive waste from the mining industry, a legacy of the Soviet Union.

Specialists state that there is currently a high risk of natural disasters involving radioactivity. The area at risk of contamination would include Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, home to around 5 million people.

Currently, average assessments place the annual cost of natural disasters in Kyrgyzstan at 35 million US dollars, while government funding for managing the aftermath of emergencies amounts to less than 7 million US dollars per year. In other words, expenditure on disaster management is five times smaller than the actual cost.

I will now turn to measures being taken to reduce the risk of disasters on a national and regional level.

Kyrgyzstan has adopted two important fundamental documents on a national level with a long term focus. They are the National Sustainable Development Strategy for the period 2013 to 2017 and the Comprehensive Strategy for the Security of the People and Territory of the Kyrgyz Republic in Emergency and Crisis Situations for the period until 2020, which includes the issues of environmental security and disaster risk reduction. The transition to sustainable development makes it vital to include the environmental factor in the system of basic economic development indicators.

On the one hand, economic activity helps to reduce poverty and create social progress. However, if it is not to threaten the environmental sustainability of natural ecosystems, there will need to be more effective planning and management of the country's transition to sustainable development through various forms of green development.

Consideration during strategic planning of issues of climate change adaptation, including the potential of water and energy resources, energy production, agriculture and the risk of natural disasters, will be of significant economic benefit to Kyrgyzstan. It will allow us to minimize the threat to health, property and public infrastructure and to mitigate the associated economic costs.

New national policies to protect the environment and ensure environmental security will focus on:

- A gradual transition to a strategic planning system for sustainable development by all bodies engaging in economic, social and environmental activities, regardless of ownership, devoting equal attention to its economic, social and environmental components;
- Implementing green projects in order to improve ecosystems and prevent emergencies;
- Minimizing the environmental impact of economic growth by performing environmental impact assessments of planned agricultural projects and other development schemes;
- Fees for natural resource use and compensation for environmental damage as a result of violations of environmental protection legislation;
- Accessibility and transparency regarding environmental information;
- Participation by all stakeholders in decision-making on environmental protection issues and rational natural resource use on both national and local levels.

Distinguished colleagues,

At the same time, we must be aware that all of the steps that have been taken are insufficient to fully resolve all of the challenges that we currently face. Only by consolidating further efforts will it in future be possible to ensure that the measures and actions taken to reduce disaster risk in Kyrgyzstan and in Central Asia are lasting.