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Vienna, 26 July 2011

Dear Colleagues,

The Chairmanship has the honor to forward to the attention of the Delegations and Secretariat the attached Chair's Perception Paper on the OSCE Chairmanship Event 20 May 2011 in the context of the "V-to-V" Dialogues: Informal Ambassadorial Meeting on Challenges Posed by Natural and Man-Made Disasters and the Co-ordinated Response of the International Community.

Enclosure: 5 pages.

Yours sincerely,



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Ambassador, Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council

All Delegations to the OSCE
OSCE Partners for Co-operation
OSCE Secretariat



**OSCE Chairmanship Event on 20 May 2011 in the context of the “V-to-V”
Dialogues:
Informal Ambassadorial Meeting on Challenges Posed by Natural and
Man-Made Disasters and the Co-ordinated Response of the International
Community**

Chair’s Perception

On 20 May 2011, the Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship convened an Informal Ambassadorial Meeting on Challenges Posed by Natural and Man-Made Disasters and the Co-ordinated Response of the International Community within the framework of the “V-to-V” Dialogues. The “V-to-V” Dialogues are a set of informal discussions on topics covering all three dimensions of Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security.

This meeting took stock of multilateral agreements, instruments, good practices and policies in disaster preparedness, risk reduction and disaster response in the OSCE area, and discussed a possible role for the OSCE.

International experts presented existing international efforts in the field of disaster preparedness, risk reduction and disaster response. Presentations addressed the following topics:

- Activities of the OSCE in disaster preparedness, risk reduction and disaster response;
- Multilateral environmental agreements and their role in disaster preparedness, risk reduction and disaster response in the OSCE area;
- Good practice in disaster relief;
- Safety of sensitive infrastructure from disasters.

The presentations inspired discussions on a possible complementary role of the OSCE in ensuring preparedness, reducing risk and responding to natural and man-made disasters. In general, the participating States welcomed such a role, although they agreed that a specific niche would have to be found in order to complement existing activities carried out by other international actors.

The participating States emphasized that discussions on this topic should be connected to other discussions taking place within the “V-to-V” Dialogues, in particular to discussions on the conflict cycle. They stressed that environmental and economic factors should be a part of a comprehensive early-warning system.

*) Correction due to change of distribution status

This paper elaborates on the main findings, arguments and recommendations that emerged from the Meeting regarding the potential role of the OSCE in disaster preparedness, risk reduction and disaster response, as perceived by the OSCE Chairmanship.

1. The OSCE already has a limited mandate for disaster preparedness, risk reduction and disaster response, which primarily considers environmental emergencies.

Natural and man-made disasters were first addressed by the CSCE participating States in the Helsinki Summit Declaration of 1992. In that Declaration, the participating States committed themselves to exchange information on risk reduction in respect of environmental emergencies, and encouraged the designation of national environmental arrangements, such as task forces, which could co-ordinate the dissemination of relevant information on expertise and equipment to countries facing emergencies.

The OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension of 2003 (MC(11).JOUR/2 2 December 2003, Annex1) calls for the threat of disasters to be identified in a timely fashion and tackled by the common efforts of the participating States. The Maastricht Strategy Document of 2003 and the Madrid Declaration on Environment and Security (MC.DOC/4/07) of 2007 highlight the multidimensionality of the challenge posed by disasters. Both state that natural and man-made disasters may pose a threat to security and may contribute to conflict.

The question of disaster response has also been raised in the context of co-operation in respect of border management. The OSCE Border Security and Management Concept (MC.DOC/2/05) of 2005 mentions facilitation of cross-border co-operation in cases of natural disasters or serious accidents in border zones as a possible contribution of the OSCE.

The OSCE participating States have usually considered natural and man-made disasters in the context of environmental emergencies, defining them as a threat to security and a potential source of conflict. The OSCE principles and commitments are aimed at addressing disasters in a comprehensive way. They focus on preparedness for, as well as response to, disasters. They take into account both natural and man-made disasters. The OSCE principles and commitments regarding disasters apply primarily to the OSCE participating States, encouraging them to co-operate in respect of this challenge, leaving the mandate of the executive structures in this area weakly defined.

2. Many specialized organizations and agencies are involved in disaster preparedness, risk reduction and disaster response at the global and regional levels. The OSCE could complement these efforts by facilitating co-operation at the subregional level.

At the global level, co-operative efforts for disaster preparedness, risk reduction and disaster response between States take place in the framework of the United Nations. The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) was established by the UN member States to co-ordinate national and regional disaster preparedness and risk reduction policies. The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) is its global strategy instrument, aimed at mainstreaming disaster preparedness and risk reduction into development and planning policies. The HFA emphasizes regional co-ordination of policies, in recognition of the cross-border consequences of disasters.

A key global player in the field of disaster response is the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). In the event of major humanitarian crises and at the request of the affected State(s), OCHA ensures co-ordination between UN programmes, funds and

specialized agencies, as well as humanitarian organizations outside the UN system and local emergency-management agencies. OCHA also manages financial donations to make sure that the response of the international community is as effective as possible.

In the OSCE area, the European Union's Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO) draws on the resources of 27 EU member States and five partner countries to provide support in the event of a major emergency. ECHO acts at the request of the affected country, and increasingly co-operates with OCHA in major emergencies around the world, in particular through the EU's Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC).

Disaster preparedness, risk reduction and emergency response assistance are also dealt with at the national, bilateral and subregional levels. Increasingly, countries join in the development of subregional mechanisms for disaster preparedness and risk reduction.

3. OSCE activities should focus on facilitating co-operation, building confidence and reducing tensions between participating States and should involve both the Secretariat and the field operations.

The OSCE participating States have recognized disasters and their economic and environmental consequences as a threat to security and a potential source of conflict. Disaster preparedness and response, like economic and environmental activities more generally, can hence be a tool for preventing conflicts and building confidence. The Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship recently convened a Workshop on Economic and Environmental Activities as Confidence-Building Measures, and a Workshop on Post-Conflict Rehabilitation: Stabilization, Reconstruction and Peace building, both of which confirmed the importance of co-operation in respect of economic and environmental challenges for building confidence between States and communities.

Mindful of this linkage, the Office of the Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) has, in co-operation with OSCE field operations, implemented wildfire assessments in areas affected by conflict in the South Caucasus, namely, the OSCE-led environmental assessment mission to fire-affected territories in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region of 2006 and the joint OSCE/UNEP environmental assessment mission to Georgia in the autumn of 2008. Based on these experiences, the OSCE developed a regional capacity-building project for wildfire management in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia that featured risk assessments, firefighter training, and capacity-building for national wildfire-management plans. A follow-up activity in respect of this project will be introduced in 2011. Drawing on its expertise in wildfire management, the OSCE could implement similar activities in other subregions.

Building on the success of disaster-related confidence-building activities, the OCEEA and the OSCE field operations should continue to develop disaster preparedness and risk reduction activities in the economic and environmental dimension. The OSCE could join forces with UNEP in the framework of the Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative to support post-disaster environmental assessments, on terms similar to those of the 2006 and 2008 post-conflict assessments.

4. The OSCE should continue supporting UNECE multilateral environmental agreements relevant to disaster preparedness, risk reduction and disaster response.

Co-operative relations between participating States are advanced by rules-based behaviour. For this reason, the OSCE has continuously promoted the implementation of relevant

international legal instruments managing interdependencies in the field of economics and the environment. Several of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) are relevant for disaster preparedness and response. The UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents outlines preparedness and risk-reduction measures and obliges parties to co-operate in response to cases of industrial accidents that have transboundary effects (with some notable exceptions, including accidents at military sites). The Convention also put in place an Industrial Accident Notification System. The UNECE maintains this System in a standardized online format that is operated by the parties' points of contact in case of emergency. The UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) obliges parties to consult affected parties when developing projects and programmes that have transboundary environmental implications. A transboundary environmental impact assessment process includes consideration of the safety of sensitive infrastructure, including industrial plants and nuclear installations, in the event of a natural disaster.

The OSCE has worked closely with UNECE's Espoo Convention Secretariat in the framework of the ENVSEC Initiative, supporting the implementation of the Convention in several OSCE subregions. The OSCE should continue its activities in ENVSEC for promoting implementation of MEAs relevant to disaster preparedness and response by building the capacity of participating States for compliance with these conventions.

5. The OSCE could function as a regional platform for collection and dissemination of practical information and co-ordination of efforts by participating States in disaster preparedness, risk reduction and disaster response.

In addition to activities facilitating co-operation on disaster preparedness and response at the subregional level, the OSCE could act as a regional platform for exchange of practical information and for co-ordination of disaster preparedness and response efforts.

To improve disaster preparedness, risk reduction and disaster response, the OSCE could create a database of available relief assets in OSCE participating States that would facilitate identification of relevant relief assets by a requesting OSCE participating State in the event of an emergency, and would support timely and relevant emergency assistance. This database of relief assets could be modelled on the Policing Experts Database that the Strategic Police Matters Unit maintains.

To expedite the delivery of assistance requested, the OSCE could support the creation of an international instrument governing the issuance of visas, flight permissions, customs exemptions and customs clearance for disaster-relief practitioners and equipment. This instrument would feature clear specifications and instructions for authorities in sending and receiving countries, and should be in line with the OSCE Border Security and Management Concept.

Finally, the OSCE could function as a platform for collection and dissemination of best practices in disaster preparedness, risk reduction and disaster response practices. Working closely with international and regional organizations like OCHA, UNEP, UNISDR, the EU, CICA, the International Committee of the Red Cross/Red Crescent and others, the OSCE could set up a clearing house for the collection of information and best practices in disaster

preparedness, risk reduction and disaster response. This mechanism could be combined with a proposed clearing house on economic and environmental confidence-building.

6. The operational aspects of the OSCE's role in disaster preparedness, risk reduction and disaster response require further discussion.

The OCEEA has been instrumental in implementing disaster preparedness, risk reduction and disaster response in the OSCE area. The OCEEA joins forces with field operations in the implementation of activities, but should also work with other structures of the Secretariat, including the Borders Unit. During the Meeting, it was suggested that OSCE field operations should be explicitly tasked with building capacity in respect of disaster preparedness, risk reduction and disaster response activities in the framework of their mandates in the economic and environmental dimension. OSCE field operations could also offer support in terms of logistics or the provision of information and contacts to incoming response teams of the UN and the EU when a disaster takes place. Appropriate training for OSCE staff in responding to disasters could be considered. The OSCE could also set up an OSCE solidarity fund based on voluntary contributions that could provide funding for emergency response and post-disaster assessment work.

These and other operational details of the role of the OSCE require further discussion, which could be conducted in the context of deliberations on confidence-building in the OSCE's economic and environmental dimension. These efforts should take place in the framework of the Economic and Environmental Committee and the Economic and Environmental Dimension Implementation Meeting in the autumn of 2011, where deliverables for the Vilnius Ministerial Council meeting could also be discussed and developed.