

Statement by the Delegation of the Federal Republic of Germany

delivered by Mr. Gerhard Küntzle, Minister, Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to the OSCE

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to take the opportunity to present some German activities with respect to water management and with a special focus on Central Asia. Co-operation in the water sector will be one of the key factors for stability, security and development in the 21st century and is therefore rightly also at the top of the OSCE agenda.

About 6 weeks ago, German Foreign Minister Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier hosted an international conference in Berlin “Water unites – New Prospects for Co-operation and Security”. OSCE was represented by the Co-ordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities and by a representative of the Finish Chairmanship. Participants agreed that regional cooperation was the only viable way forward to provide for secure and stable access of all regional stakeholders to water.

To address existing problems we do not have to reinvent the wheel. There are many examples of successful regional water cooperation in the OSCE area. Cooperation arrangements to manage the Rivers Rhine, Elbe, Sava or Danube demonstrate that everyone benefits from a co-operative approach. And the concept works – if we take the example of the river Danube - from east to west, from Ukraine to Germany.

At the Berlin Conference, Minister Steinmeier announced a German water initiative for Central Asia that I briefly would like to present here. It aims at promoting regional water cooperation in Central Asia, more specifically: at improving and supporting transboundary water management. A number of very interesting proposals have emerged from inside the region and international organisations. Our aim is to integrate these ideas into one modular program that will lead to increased capacity of Central Asian Institutions to develop and implement solutions for existing water-related problems.

In order to achieve these goals there is a need to intensify the transfer of know-how. To facilitate this, German and Central Asian research institutions will collaborate more closely and conduct joint research on water issues and weather events such as droughts and floods. The “Geoforschungszentrum Potsdam” will take this forward with Foreign Office assistance, and I am glad that we will have the opportunity to learn more about this project from one of

its initiators, Dr. Andreas Küppers, in the course of tomorrow's session. We also plan to start a new course on sustainable water management at the Kazakh-German University in Almaty. The initiative will be rounded up by a series of visits of Central Asian experts to German and European water institutions and water management projects. Last but not least we plan to increase our support for Germany's water industry and its many different activities in Central Asia. We need private investment to provide the instruments and bring about the solutions that are necessary to meet the complex challenges like, for example, maintaining high water quality in an environment of deteriorating ground and surface water resources.

Germany sees this initiative as a contribution to the implementation of the European Union Strategy on Central Asia. It should become the starting-point for a structured, longer-term water partnership between Central Asia, the EU and other interested partners, including, of course, the OSCE. In this context, we particularly welcome the readiness of the OSCE to support a conference on water related disaster management, which will take place in Dushanbe in the end of June and to which Germany will also contribute by providing technical advice by gtz.