



**Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OSCE Centre in Ashgabat**

Welcoming Remarks for Technical Workshop on Oil Spills Response and Cleanup

Ambassador Ibrahim Djikic,
Head of OSCE Centre in Ashgabat

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Dear Participants,
Ladies and gentlemen

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you, on behalf of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat, to this important technical workshop on oil spills response and clean-up. I would like to thank, in particular, the Government of Turkmenistan for agreeing to host this important event. I would also like to thank the Government of Spain for providing financial support.

Oil and gas extraction, along with transportation and industrial production, has been the source of severe air, water, and soil pollution in the Caspian region. Systematic water sampling in different parts of the Caspian basin shows contamination from phenols, oil products and other sources. Mineral deposit exploration, particularly oil extraction and pipeline construction, have contributed to the pollution of about 30,000 hectares of land. Pollution from oil fields and refineries continues at a high rate due to the use of outdated technology, malfunctioning equipment, and simple human disregard.

The development of the oil and gas industry in the Caspian Sea region has brought disturbing alterations to the natural environment that have triggered demands to the international community for technical and financial assistance. Due to its landlocked nature, the process of self-purification in the Caspian takes approximately 40 years. This means that unless a comprehensive programme of environmental regeneration is launched in the foreseeable future, the consequences of the current crisis will be extremely serious.

The OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension states that “the protection of the environment is a high priority for all our States. In light of the growing impact of environmental factors on the prosperity, stability and security of our States and the health of our populations, we encourage dialogue and the exchange of information, inter alia, on best practices, on a voluntary basis, on environmental issues of importance for participating States, including on environmentally sound technology”.

The technical workshop on oil spills remediation in the Caspian Sea region compliments the “Workshop on transport, security and environment: experience of regional co-operation in the High North to promote safe and secure multimodal corridors while protecting a fragile environment. Identifying best practices” that took place during October 16-18, 2006 in Tønsberg, Norway and was organized jointly by the Kingdom of Norway in co-operation with the OSCE. The workshop is also a follow up to the recently concluded Second Preparatory Conference to the Sixteenth OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum on “Maritime and inland waterways cooperation in the OSCE area: Increasing security and protecting the environment” which took place in Ashgabat last week. The conference was organized under the aegis of the current Finnish Chairmanship of the OSCE.

It is our expectation that the workshop, through bringing together experts and policymakers from the Caspian littoral states as well as western institutions, will bring value added to discussions on national and international experiences on secure oil spills remediation. In that spirit, I wish you all very fruitful discussions and hope that you enjoy your stay in Turkmenbashi.

Thank you.