



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON
the Security and Environment Nexus

Delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen at the Joint Forum for Security
Cooperation – Permanent Council
Vienna, 12 July 2023

Chairs, Madame Secretary General, colleagues,

Environmental issues are *undeniably* and *inextricably* linked to issues of security and stability in the OSCE region. Last week's high-level conference on climate change attested to this, with climate change being an integral and inseparable component of the global environmental agenda.

Norway has followed the discussion on the relationship between environmental issues, climate change, and security with particular interest over the last years, not least during our tenure as member of the UN Security Council. We view the OSCE as an indispensable format to continue this work at the regional level, and are therefore grateful to the FSC chairpersonship of Bulgaria and to the CiO for putting this important issue on the agenda. We also warmly welcome the panelists, and thank them for their insightful reflections.

Colleagues,

Armed conflict is innately destructive, and its consequences, wide-reaching. The environmental damage caused by conflict brings devastating consequences for natural resources, critical ecosystems, and for people's health, livelihoods, and security.

Nothing paints a more sobering picture of these realities as the current war in Ukraine. Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine has brought enormous human suffering. Yet beyond its human toll, the war has had a devastating impact on the environment, the reverberations of which are felt globally, affecting global health, as well as food- and energy security.

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Russia's aggression against Ukraine has provided further proof of the environmental costs of war, including its detrimental impact on climate action. The war's direct emissions – as well as those linked to shifts in regional and global energy supplies –, have affected our ability to reduce global emissions, and will undoubtedly continue to affect such efforts for years to come.

The tangible remnants of the war have also left its mark. In Ukraine, land mines, cluster munitions, and other explosives are contaminating groundwater and soil with metals and toxic chemicals. Fires caused by shelling and other military activity are leading to air pollution, causing irreversible health risks, and irreparable harm to biodiversity.

While the Ukrainian population has undoubtedly borne the brunt of these consequences, the long-term effects of this war on the environment, and on the climate, will not be confined to the Ukrainian border. The war's consequences do not discriminate between territorial borders, between civilians and non-civilians, between women and men, or between the old and the young. The transboundary nature of environmental and climate change issues makes this a security issue of true, international character. It further reaffirms what we all know to be true: that the security of all participating States is tied to the security of Ukraine.

Colleagues, chairs,

The environmental implications of military activities – whether that be in peacetime or in wartime –, cannot be denied. Nor can the fact that the environmental damage of military activities begins long before the onset of conflict. The participating States currently experiencing peacetime must act responsibly, and take the necessary steps to ensure that our armed forces contribute to the green transition. From choice of army vehicles – to climate-sensitive decision-making during training exercises – to making different operational choices –, these are all necessary components of a climate-friendly armed forces. Innovation and new technology will also have central role in such a transition.

The Norwegian Armed Forces have, in this regard, developed a climate and environmental strategy, which pledges to cut emissions from military activity with 20% by 2030. The Norwegian Armed Forces have additionally entrenched environmental disaster response in our 'total defense' strategy, cementing the relationship between the environment, and security in our defense policy. A report by the Total Defense Commission, which was published in June this year, dedicates an entire chapter to climate related disaster mitigation and response, further demonstrating the significance of this issue for our country's military capabilities, and for our country's defense.

Just as peacetime and wartime military activity is fundamentally linked to environmental issues, so is post-conflict reconstruction. We must ensure, in this regard, that Ukraine's reconstruction – once Russia's senseless and unjustified aggression comes to an end – is green and sustainable. This year, Norway launched a five-year support programme to Ukraine: the Nansen Programme. Through this program, we, among other things, support the Nordic Green Bank's Green Recovery Program in Ukraine.

Chairs,

In closing, let me underline that the protection of the environment, and its link to security, is a pressing concern. Humans' impact on the environment has fundamentally changed the security architecture of the OSCE-region, and will continue to do so for many years to come.

The OSCE is *uniquely* positioned to make *substantive* and *meaningful* contributions on this issue. Yet, with this role comes added responsibility. Because the link between security and environmental issues is embedded in the very nature of this organization, we bear a responsibility to leverage the platform of this organization for meaningful dialogue on this issue.

Thank you.