



Mr. Minister, Ambassadors, Secretary General  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the government of Spain, and as Chairman of the Permanent Council of this Organization, I would like to thank and welcome all the speakers and panellists to this first part of the 15th Economic and Environmental Forum on “*Key challenges to ensure environmental security and sustainable development in the OSCE area: Land degradation, soil contamination and water management*”.

I am also pleased to welcome representatives of governments, key international organizations, civil society and OSCE Field Presences. Special thanks to Mr. Bernard Snoy, Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, and his staff, for their dedication and efficient work to organize this forum.

Ladies and gentlemen

In Maastricht 2003 *we reaffirmed the substantive importance of the economic and environmental dimension in the OSCE concept of comprehensive security and cooperation, and its role in early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation.* Today, as we open the first major event of the Economic and Environmental Dimension of the OSCE in 2007, Spain wishes to insist on the reasons reflected in the “*OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension*” that was issued at that occasion. More than three years after Maastricht we believe that its strategic importance has increased and that there is a lot to be done. Therefore, our main goal for this year will be to insist in raising awareness on the linkage between environment and security, on the need to move from rhetoric to implementation and to sustainable development.

With the contributions of this Forum and with the invaluable help of the Office of the Coordinator of the OSCE Economic and Environmental



Activities, we will work on the drafting of a **Strategy on Environmental Security**. Spain considers that this strategy might have a great added value to the efforts made by the international community to accommodate environmental concerns in all aspects of our lives. The United Nations and its relevant agencies have made important contributions to the field of environmental international law and to the concept and practice of an environmentally sound sustainable development, particularly since the Rio Conference in 1992.

We now consider that the OSCE can contribute to this global effort by bringing the link between Environment and Security to the attention of governments and the international public opinion. Furthermore, in so doing we firmly believe that we will be positioning the OSCE at the forefront of a global debate on Environmental challenges and the very future of Humankind.

Ladies and gentlemen

At a more concrete level, by adopting the proposed Strategy we will be also highlighting the demonstrated role of environmental matters in all the cycle of conflicts, whose prevention, management and resolution, let us not forget, remain the core mandate of our Organisation. All in all, we are conscious that drafting and adopting an Environmental Security Strategy is an ambitious goal. This is why we consider that this Forum is so relevant for us, and this is why we encourage you to share with us your views in these matters in order to get the necessary input to cover the whole spectrum of ideas to build up the Strategy.

In fact, the theme for this year's EEF has been chosen taking into account the international relevance of different environmental issues with security implications, such as global climate changes, unsustainable use of natural resources, desertification, and draught and trans boundary pollution, among others. We are becoming more and more aware that environmental problems dramatically impact the life of people, with very serious consequences on the ecosystem, leading to loss of economic opportunities and to severe poverty.



Land and soil related problems are global in nature and to tackle them we need a global approach too. This approach should be done by putting into place sound economic and sustainable development policies, protecting the environment, and sticking to principles of good governance. We also believe that the OSCE and its field presences are well positioned to support the participating States in implementing good governance practices.

Only by dealing with the problem of the deterioration of ecosystems, -a cause for poverty and serious social problems in many countries-, we can fight against the lack of resources which is also inducing to environmental migrations. It is our task, with your help, to examine the exact role that the OSCE can play in raising awareness of this situation and in promoting cooperation to deal with it as soon as possible.

Ladies and gentlemen

Unfortunately, Governments have not made the necessary substantial progress in environmental policies. There is a feeling that there is a lack of political will and, what is even worse, it looked to many of us, -because we were living inside that phenomenon-, that economic growth could not take place without harming the ecosystems! This is a matter of culture and education and this wrong perception should be urgently eliminated, as we have to promote the crucial sustainable development.

The Minister of Environment of Spain, Cristina Narbona, said in an opportunity that *if we want a safer world, we need a more just world based in more sustainable criteria. We can't fight against poverty and the inequality that is provoking, among other things, the wave of migrations, if we don't pay due and good attention to the deterioration of the ecosystems which are behind of the increase of poverty and the social problems in our planet.*

We have too many treaties, too many international agencies, but we lack coordination and cooperation among them; as well as a lack of efficiency in the use of economic resources. International treaties on environmental issues have been for too long subordinated to the World Trade Organization, the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund; although



we should emphasize that these institutions are increasingly taking into account environmental criteria for their financial operations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Spain will encourage these institutions and the business community to assist the OSCE's participating States with business practices which are sustainable and environmentally friendly. Through responsible action, businesses will become more competitive. We look forward to the active involvement of the business community and the financial institutions.

Environmental issues unfortunately lag behind other priorities in politics, but we need to be optimistic about their future. That's why we are here today: to encourage governments and the civil society to be responsible and to act against this threat to mankind.

The OSCE has something to offer through enhancing the dialog among participating States on economic and environmental issues, improving the process of review the implementation of the commitments, strengthening our capacity to provide advice and assistance to all pS and through mobilizing and facilitating the expertise and resources of other international organizations.

On behalf of the CiO I invite you to participate, to discuss and to exchange views on these relevant themes. With your participation we are going to make a much-needed contribution to future generations.

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