

STATEMENT
by
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**ENVSEC National Focal Point, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Armenia
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Dear colleagues,

I'd like to welcome everyone here and thank the office of the Coordinator of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities and Environment and Security Initiative in particular for hosting and organizing this meeting.

I represent the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, and am here in the capacity of ENVSEC focal point and CASE National Screening Board member.

In 2009 the OSCE through the Environment and Security Initiative presented to the consideration of the ENVSEC National Advisory group in Armenia the project called Civic Action for Security and Environment, CASE. At that first ENVSEC National Advisory group meeting the CASE project manager introduced its program and briefed the participants on the CASE, the role of the National Screening Board, and the drafting process of the CASE Country Strategy.

CASE Armenia is a small grants program aimed at supporting civil society organizations in addressing security and environment challenges in Armenia. Its major objectives are to raise awareness on environmental challenges, to build capacity of civil society organization, and to support through small grants projects of civil society organizations addressing environmental challenges in cooperation with the government of Armenia.

Representatives of the Armenian government, civil society and international organizations, as well as academia participated in the launching meeting of CASE in Armenia and formed the basis for the development of the CASE Country Strategy. The ENVSEC National Advisory group, with the leadership of the OSCE office in Yerevan created the CASE National Screening Board. The members serve on a 6 monthly rotational basis upon appointment of the government. Currently the Board consists of 11 members representing OSCE, UNDP offices in Yerevan, ENVSEC National Focal Points, Ministries of Territorial Administration and Nature Protection, WWF Armenia, Aarhus Center, Association of Human Sustainable Development. It of course helps to ensure transparency and accountability of the project in Armenia, and avoids duplication with other programs.

A few meetings were held, including special meetings in each 13 Armenian Aarhus Centers to inform local stakeholders about the program and its strategy.

The Armenian Country Strategy is a framework document based on the CASE Guidelines that identifies all technical and operational issues related to

implementation of CASE in Armenia, assigns responsibility to its stakeholders, and establishes country specific criteria for the selection of projects proposals to be supported under CASE. The document particularly identifies challenges for environment and security in Armenia, and describes the government's approach to environmental governance. Key challenges include the rehabilitation of Lake Sevan, deforestation, industrial waste treatment and private and industrial waste disposal, the environmental situation in Yerevan, land erosion, biodiversity preservation, air pollution, industrial and mining hubs of Alaverdi, Ararat, Vanadzor and Hrazdan, water pollution and low capacity of wastewater treatment.

Environmental governance in Armenia is directed by a national legislative framework, which is currently under evolution, and the National Environmental Action Plan of 2008-2012. Armenia is actively engaged in international processes and initiatives and is implementing many regional and sub-regional programs and mechanisms to achieve sustainable environmental protection in the country and region overall. It is party to number of international conventions, including 4 environmental conventions under the UNECE. The Action Plan sets all environmental priorities and targets of that governance, including environmental monitoring, education, public awareness-raising, research and development.

In this regard I should mention that the Armenian Aarhus Center Network and the Center for Environmental Rights have strengthened public awareness on the environment and participation in environmental decision-making. The CASE Armenia strategy ensures a strong role for the Aarhus Center Network in supporting CSO participation in CASE through the provision of expertise and facilitation of their coordination.

Currently there are more than 2000 CSOs registered in Armenia, and 10% of them are dealing with environmental issues. But there's an uneven geographical distribution of those organizations- 70% of them are based in the capital, and many of them are managed by the environmental scientists and academics. To address skewed geographical distribution of CSOs, CASE Armenia prioritizes support for rural projects.

Based on all those considerations the CASE National Screening Board identified the following thematic priorities for CASE in Armenia: sustainable management of natural resources, climate change, land degradation, hazardous waste and hazardous chemicals management, reduction of the negative impacts of mining, sustainable use of energy, transport, environmental education, strengthening of Armenian CSO capacities for environmental actions. The priorities should be jointly addressed with the cross-cutting themes of environmental governance, social aspects of environmental security, role and participation of women and youth.

In October 2009 the official call for projects proposals was posted and 42 project proposals were received.

Since then the CASE Screening Board had 3 meetings, during which project managers of civil society organizations were given the opportunity to present their proposals. Board members discussed them, decided whether to approve or not, reflect, or return for reformulation the project proposals. Decisions were made

based on the scoring system that reflects the three target outputs of CASE projects and applies sustainability, management and budgeting criteria.

The first board meeting approved 5 projects of the first phase of CASE, the second – 6 projects out of 16, and the third considered some reformulated projects of the second phase, approved 6 additional projects and in total 17 projects submitted have so far been approved.

I will talk briefly on the projects and let my colleagues to introduce them in more details. The first five projects represent quite a broad geography, including the capital Yerevan, Alaverdi, Lori and Syunik regions, cities of Hrazdan, Yeghvard and Goris. Their objectives are to stimulate Yerevan Municipality to review public transportation policy of the capital by expanding number of capacious transport vehicles, giving preference to electric transport means; assess the risks of Alaverdi arsenic graveyard and its impacts on the environment and population of the region; to held seminar in Kotayk and Syunik regions on pollutant release and transfer registers and environmental information; to improve the environment in Hrazdan region by encouraging local industry to reduce pollutant release and to create ecological information network in the city of Yeghvard; raise public awareness on the importance of the preservation of green zones and recreational areas in Goris.

CASE Armenia phase two included the following projects:

- Assessment of risk of heavy metal pollution of farm products in Alaverdi, presented by the Center for ecological-noosphere studies
- Assessment of security risks of environmental hot spots in Lori, Sevan Basin, Syunik region of Armenia, presented by “Ecolur” NGO
- Raising awareness on environmental problems of Yerevan city, so called “Whither Yerevan” project, presented by “Antenna” NGO
- Provision of expertise on ISO 14001:2004 EMS standard requirements and implementation benefits, presented by “Khazer” Ecological and Cultural NGO
- Production of a film on Environmental problems in Gegharkunik region, presented by “Blejan” NGO
- Development of Local Environmental Action Plan for the town of Kapan, presented by REC Caucasus

Finally CASE Armenia phase three includes:

- Capacity building, awareness raising and participation initiatives of the economic mechanisms of environmental management of all Armenian Aarhus centers in 10 regions, carried out by the “Association of young environmental lawyers and economists” NGO
- Strengthening capacities of communities on environmental management- Hrazdan River quality improvement, covering Ararat and Armavir regions, carried out by “Hayanist” Intercommunity association
- Project on organic agriculture, awareness raising among farmers in Tavush region, presented by “Farmers of Tavush” association

- Awareness raising on environment and security problems at the local level in Aragatsotn region, presented by “Hayrenapasht” youth NGO
- Environmental impact on strong earthquakes, presented by Armenian Association of seismology and physics of the Earth.

With this, I would like to stress once again the support of my government and importance of the continuation of the Civic Action for security and environment program in Armenia and pass the floor to my colleagues.

Thank you.