



Statement by Switzerland
Opening Session, 2nd Preparatory Meeting,
OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum 2015
11 May 2015, Belgrade

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

One year ago many of us were together in Montreux. Switzerland, for the 2nd Preparatory meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum 2014, dedicated to Disaster risk reduction. Our gathering coincided with the devastating floods in South East Europe. And so, the Serbian speaker who was invited to Montreux had to cancel his participation, in order to co-ordinate the emergency response. Today we are gathered here in Belgrade for this 2nd Preparatory Meeting of the EEF 2015, which put Disaster Risk Reduction as one of its main focus. We are very interested to hear the experiences and lessons learned from the different countries of the region and from the OSCE missions, especially from a security point of view. We are very grateful to the Serbian Chairmanship for receiving us in such a magnificent venue and for having put together an excellent and balanced agenda for this second Preparatory meeting. Our thanks go also to the OSCE Office of the Coordinator of economic and environmental activities for their professional work.

One of our Swiss Chairmanship's priorities last year was to put Disaster risk reduction high on the OSCE agenda. We are therefore delighted that DRR will receive a special attention during this year's Forum. We see this as a continuous effort of the Swiss and Serbian consecutive Chairmanships and as an appropriate follow-up to the Ministerial Council Decision on enhancing DRR that was adopted in Basel in December 2014. Last year we talked much about best practices and the

benefits of transboundary cooperation, the importance of local actors and DRR as confidence building measures. Those are also the main pillars of the Decision adopted in Basel. In the next few days, we will have the chance to hear the experiences from the practitioners and first responders to last year's flooding in the Balkan region. We will also have the opportunity to visit the affected areas and to see it with our own eyes. We are very much thankful to Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as to the OSCE missions in both countries for making this possible.

The other main topics we will address during this Prepmeeting, awareness-raising and public participation in water governance, are key. Switzerland believes that water is becoming a new common challenge, which is bringing people and governments together to find innovative solutions to deal with it. According to Switzerland experience as an upstream country and a member of several transboundary water commissions, policy makers are ready to discuss transparent, coherent and cost efficient set of policies, laws and institutions at the local, national and regional levels for sustainable water resource management. That is why we are convinced that it is timely for the OSCE, as the largest regional security organization, to address water governance and the security benefits we can gain from it, in the framework of this Forum. We are also interested to start reflecting on possible elements which might be anchored in a ministerial Decision to be adopted later this year. In this sense, we are very much looking forward to our 2-day discussions.

I thank you.