



United States Mission to the OSCE

Closing Statement, Concluding Meeting 2014 Economic and Environmental Forum

As Delivered by Nathan Jones
Prague, Czech Republic
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Thank you, Mr. Coordinator

Good morning, fellow delegates, representatives, and distinguished guests. As we come to the end of this Concluding Meeting, and the end of the EEF Cycle for this year, we again would like to thank the Swiss Chairmanship, Dr. Yiğitguden and his staff at the OCEEA, the OSCE office here in Prague, and of course our gracious hosts here at the Czech Foreign Ministry, for the tremendous work they all have done in conducting this week's event.

We have all benefitted from the assembled experts here during the sessions these past three days, and we thank them for their excellent presentations. Now the responsibility turns to us. It is up to the delegations in Vienna now to distill all that we have heard from the experts, and develop activities and commitments that are appropriate for the OSCE, that will build on its comparative advantages. Based on what we have heard, it appears that one area that could prove particularly fruitful for greater commitment is by using the OSCE's field missions to assist host countries in their own efforts to prepare for disasters.

We heard a clear call for assistance as countries develop disaster risk assessments, and for increasing regional cooperation on disasters, since often times these events have an impact that does not respect national borders. Promoting the development of regional networks for early warning, risk assessment, and cooperation on disaster response seems a natural fit for an organization like ours, and of course can have additional positive effects outside the immediate subject of disaster risk reduction.

We have heard the calls from those involved with the post-2015 Hyogo Framework for Action negotiations, for the OSCE to provide its expertise in security issues related to disasters. We look forward to examining how the OSCE can be more involved in the HFA discussions and contribute this unique perspective.

We were particularly pleased to hear about the efforts going on in Albania, with the support of the OSCE Field Presence there, to address corruption involving environmental issues, and the relation of that to disaster risk reduction. This sort of action is vital, and we should continue to examine ways the OSCE can support it on a wider basis.

The candor of some of our panelists, especially those who serve in ministries responsible for disaster preparedness and response was refreshing. The work of preparing for and responding to natural disasters is often a very thankless job, with mistakes amplified far

beyond the normal attention given to government and public service. We were struck in particular by the comments of Assistant Minister Maric, of Serbia, speaking of the importance of telling the public the truth 100% of the time when a disaster occurs. This is a lesson that should be shared far and wide, and we might examine ways in which the OSCE can help participating States as they seek to instill this approach in their work.

Fellow delegates, the responsibility for this work is now passed to us. These are critical issues, and the OSCE clearly can play an important role in helping us all address them. We look forward to working with all of you over the next several months to determine where and how exactly this organization should proceed.

Once again we thank the Swiss Chairmanship and the OSCE Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities for their hard work in organizing these sessions, and the Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic for hosting us all so graciously.

Thank you, Mr. Coordinator.