



United States Mission to the OSCE

Security Dialogue – Security and Environment Nexus

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter
to the 88th Joint Meeting of the Forum for Security Co-operation
and the Permanent Council
Vienna, July 12, 2023

Thank you to our panel of experts for sharing their very informative insights with us, and a special thanks to Dr. Rowena Watson for coming all the way from Washington to be with us today.

The drafters of the Helsinki Final Act were prescient when they linked the environment to our comprehensive concept of security. It is clear today that climate change poses a threat to our collective security and that this threat knows no borders. Climate change is driving water insecurity as severe weather events, including floods and droughts, impact the ability of vulnerable communities to produce food all over the world. Increased water stress and scarcity is also triggering conflicts over water resources across many different regions. Climate change is impacting our critical infrastructure. As Special Envoy Kerry noted at last week's High-Level Event on Climate Change, we now lose about 10 million people on the planet every year due to extreme heat alone. These facts require our concerted attention and collective action, including here at the OSCE, where we have a clear mandate to work on mitigating the effects of climate change and environmental degradation.

Unfortunately, we have also seen how some participating States deliberately choose to make the situation worse by weaponizing environmental destruction, as Russia is currently doing in Ukraine. Russia's repeated and often deliberate attacks on water infrastructure have caused enormous harm. Such attacks have left over 11 million Ukrainians – or one quarter of Ukraine's population – without reliable access to clean water. The June 6 destruction of Ukraine's Nova Kakhovka Dam has only served to worsen an already terrible situation. This environmental disaster, resulting directly from Russia's unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine, has forced thousands of Ukrainians from their homes and put many thousands more at risk of disease and hunger. We stand ready to support OSCE institutions in addressing the consequences of the Dam's destruction, as well as other environmental challenges, such as the massive contamination of Ukrainian land with mines and unexploded ordnance. As Dr. Watson rightly noted, the massive economic and environmental destruction resulting from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the enormous cost of reconstruction – estimated at over \$400 billion – speaks volumes about Russia's disregard for the principles and values of this Organization.

In spite of the contempt shown by this one participating State for our collective security, it remains critical that the OSCE, as the world's largest regional security organization, maintain a leadership role in helping participating States to monitor, assess, and jointly address the impacts of climate change and environmental destruction, utilizing new tools and mechanisms whenever possible. With the 2021 Ministerial Council decision, we are now

past the time of simply admiring the problem; we must now act. We are very fortunate indeed to have strong leadership within the OSCE, from our Secretary General to our Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Affairs, our excellent PC and FSC chairs as well as our three committee chairs, to tackle these challenges. I know many of our Field Missions are eager to build in additional extra-budgetary projects that will help assess and address environmental challenges, from Central Asia to the Western Balkans. This is our opportunity to meet these challenges posed by climate change and environmental destruction to improve our collective security and prosperity.

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