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“Water governance in the OSCE area – increasing security and stability through co-
operation”
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Session III. Water governance and co-operation at transboundary level: lessons
learnt for water diplomacy

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Let me start by expressing our appreciation to the Serbian chairmanship for raising a highly relevant water governance issue at the OSCE agenda. During the two preparatory meetings in Belgrade and Vienna, we have already learnt that water governance is about establishing the appropriate means and setting limits and constraints within which operational action in terms of water management can take place. And these are also achieved under conditions of proper **public accountability**. Domestic and external limits and constraints are not merely at the borderline of do's and don'ts. They also constitute the conditions for cooperation. **Without limits and rules there is no appropriate framework for transboundary water cooperation.**

If rules and limits pay the way for effective cooperation on water issues, then water diplomacy becomes a tool of this cooperation. In this regard, I would like to stress that water diplomacy stems from legal instruments such as the “UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes” and bilateral agreements.

However, the main challenge for water diplomacy is linked to the fact that aquifer systems, lakes, rivers and river basins do not necessarily follow state borders. Due to this, **transboundary water cooperation should be based on the international conventions and agreements on water resource use, management and protection also on transboundary environmental impact assessments**, which should be implemented thoroughly and strictly according to the international obligations of the sides involved.

In this respect, we would like to share Lithuania's experience in cooperation with Belarus in the sphere of trans-boundary water cooperation protocol to protect and sustainably manage the largest Lithuanian river Nemunas. Although the agreement has not been signed yet, we give the importance of this legal tool and believe that this agreement will be finalized in the nearest future, i.e. during the Seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention in Budapest this November.

We believe that no country should unilaterally implement large scale energy and hydro projects without taking into the consideration the possible consequences for its neighbors. In this regard, we encourage all states to use all external instruments and water diplomacy principles, as the basis for collaborative, sustainable and rule-based solutions on water security challenges and for subsequent regional or bilateral trans-boundary river basin agreements.