



United States Mission to the OSCE

23rd Economic and Environmental Forum ‘Water governance in the OSCE area – increasing security and stability through co-operation’ Closing Statement - Concluding Meeting

As delivered by Darren Perdue, Political Officer
Prague, Czech Republic, September 16, 2015

Good morning, fellow delegates, representatives, and distinguished guests. On behalf of the United States, I would like to thank Ambassador Zugic, Chair of the Permanent Council, Dr. Yigitguden, Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, and the Prague Office of the OSCE Secretariat for their tremendous work organizing this week’s events. Thank you as well to the Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic for graciously hosting the Forum.

During this week’s Forum, we have heard from an impressive number of technical and policy experts, NGOs, and international organizations describing the importance of good water governance in increasing security and stability in the OSCE area. Nearly every panelist and delegate throughout this Forum has emphasized the need to cooperate across borders – something that the United States believes in strongly. In fact, we view water governance as an opportunity to promote cross-border cooperation on a whole host of issues, not just water.

We learned this week that the topic of water is vast – perhaps one of the broadest, cross-cutting issues facing the OSCE. Water governance is multi-faceted, cuts across all OSCE dimensions, affects every one of our countries and regions, and involves lots of players and existing platforms. It is important that we focus efforts on where the OSCE can best add value within the context of increasing security and stability, rather than trying to tackle all of the broad ranging aspects of water governance.

Looking forward, the United States would like to see more participation by the private sector in future Economic and Environmental Forums. With the right policy, regulation, and incentives, the private sector can play an important role in helping develop innovative solutions to some of our most challenging water problems. We are very encouraged to hear German Ambassador Leendertse share plans to involve the business community throughout its upcoming Chairmanship. The United States enthusiastically welcomes this and we express our full support.

As Permanent Representative Ambassador Baer emphasized during the Opening Plenary, the United States calls on the Secretariat, the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, and the Conflict Prevention Center to explore the use of a series of table-top exercises to examine how the OSCE can best deploy resources in various risk scenarios – whether on the issue of water governance, Disaster Risk Reduction, or on other issues. Our civil engineering counterparts in the U.S. Corps of Engineers have been

conducting joint exercises for emergency management preparation for many years, and have found them to be an invaluable tool. By participating in this type of session, we can engage more closely with experts, identify specific actions and OSCE tools that could be employed, and perhaps more effectively harness the expertise and knowledge in this room.

Finally, we look forward to receiving the specific elements and practical steps identified during this week's Forum that can be undertaken in the OSCE and by participating States.

In closing, we again thank the Serbian Chairmanship and the OSCE Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities for their dedication and commitment to organizing this week's activities. Thank you to all of the impressive panelists and delegates for sharing their insights. And thanks once again to the Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic for hosting us.

Thank you, Mr. Coordinator.