

Security Aspects in the Field of the Environment:
A Review of the 7th Annual OSCE Economic Forum

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The theme of this year's Economic Forum was "Security Aspects in the Field of the Environment," as determined by the Permanent Council in Decision 281 of 17 December, 1998. An important element in the success of the year's Forum was the high level and great diversity of participants. The Forum was attended by more than a dozen Ministers and Deputy Ministers, demonstrating the political commitment of at least some participating States to addressing environmental-related security issues. In addition, representatives from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, other international organizations, a wide variety of NGO's, and the private sector all played an essential role in this year's Economic Forum, contributing to a more complete dialogue and establishing a fruitful partnership in considering the nexus between the environment and a comprehensive and co-operative approach to security.

The 7th Economic Forum had two components. First was a one-day Implementation Review Meeting in which participating States reviewed the implementation of their political commitments in the Economic Dimension, as spelled out, inter alia, in the Helsinki Final Act, the Bonn Document, the Charter of Paris, and the Helsinki and Budapest Summit Documents. Three days of meetings followed, during which the theme of the Forum was discussed in depth. This was accomplished in large part through Working Groups, which followed up on topics considered at the four preparatory seminars held in the year leading up to the Forum. The topics of the Working Groups were: A) Energy and the Environment: security and the importance of

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sustainable energy development; institutional and legal settings, including the implementation of international conventions and instruments; B) Security Aspects of Shared Water Resources and Regional Co-Operation, taking into account the different institutional and legal settings, including the implementation of international conventions and instruments; and C) Public Participation: the role of civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGO's), and the business sector in achieving sustainable development; the involvement of the OSCE. There was also a special, informal Working Group on "Environmental Security". The Working Groups are discussed in more detail below.

Preparatory Seminars

The 7th Economic Forum was the culmination of a year-long preparation process which centered on developing dialogue about the theme "Security Aspects in the Field of the Environment." Preparation for the 7th Economic Forum began immediately on the heels of the previous Forum, which had focused on security aspects of energy development. Four preparatory seminars were held in the year leading up to the 7th Economic Forum. Each was entitled "Regional Environmental Problems and Cooperative Approaches to Solving Them" and dealt with specific issues relevant to the region in which it was held. Tashkent, Istanbul, Malta, and Warnemünde each served as the site of one seminar, in that order. Within each seminar, Working Groups considered a wide variety of topics, including pollution issues, biodiversity, water and energy management, nuclear safety and waste disposal, energy and climate, public participation and sustainable development. The subjects which aroused the most interest among participants helped the organizers to focus the Economic Forum itself on the questions of greatest interest to Participating States and their citizens. Together, the seminars were intended not only to sharpen the definition of the issues for consideration at the Economic Forum, but also to start the creative thinking and consciousness-raising processes necessary to produce an

informed and fruitful dialogue within the Working Groups at the Economic Forum. The seminars were open to representatives of all OSCE participating States, as well as partner States, and to the international organizations generally referred to as the OSCE's "partner organizations" within the Economic Dimension, e.g. the UNECE, UNEP, UNDP, EBRD, OECD, IMF, ILO, IBRD, Energy Charter Secretariat, etc. Participation by NGO's, parliamentarians, business people, and academics was also actively encouraged. The number of participants in these seminars ranged from approximately 75-150.

The preparatory seminars yielded meaningful recommendations of their own and also built upon each other, culminating in the 7th Economic Forum and the recommendations it produced. This preparatory process enabled the Economic Forum to maximize dialogue on the future of the Economic Dimension at this year's meeting and to formulate meaningful, focused goals for OSCE action. In sum, the work and participation leading up to and including the Economic Forum stimulated a sharper, stronger commitment to the Economic Dimension, which has often been the subject of heated debate between and among participating States, and resulted in the articulation of specific goals, particularly pertaining to security-related environmental problems.

Implementation Review Meeting

As mandated in the 1992 Helsinki Document, one function of the Economic Forum is to review "the implementation of CSCE commitments in the area of economics, the environment and science and technology."¹ In his keynote address to the Implementation Review Meeting, the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities reminded the participating States of their commitments under the Helsinki Final Act and of the pre-eminence of those commitments. Responding to the argument sometimes made that the Helsinki Final Act is now

¹ CSCE, Helsinki Decisions, *Helsinki Document 1992: The challenges of Change*, Article VII, 'Economic Cooperation', para 22.

somehow “*démodé*”, the Co-ordinator pointed out that the inclusive, ambitious economic and environmental commitments articulated in the Helsinki Final Act have in fact been reaffirmed in subsequent documents, including the Charter of Paris and the Budapest Document of 1994. Not only that, but the Helsinki Final Act’s visionary commitments, with regard to public participation and public education in the area of environment, have recently been codified in the progressive and widely acclaimed Århus Convention.² The Helsinki Final Act declares that all of the principles therein are of “primary significance” and should therefore be “equally and unreservedly applied.”³ It should thus be clear that commitments made by participating States in the Economic Dimension remain vital, in spite of the ambivalence toward them which some States occasionally express, and that encouraging and promoting their implementation should therefore be a priority.

The commitment to economic reform among OSCE States with transition economies remains strong. In a keynote speech representing the perspective of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Mr. Geoffrey Hamilton pointed out that the “economic shocks” of the Russian economic crisis and the Kosovo crisis have tested the will of individual States to remain committed to the market principles embodied in the Bonn Document. However, these States have persevered in the face of difficulty and have remained committed to OSCE principles. Some problems persist, nevertheless. Transition economy States need to establish effective institutions in order to support economic reforms and to create an environment conducive to foreign investment. Closely related to this problem is the (at best) “partial” rule of law in many transition States. The experiences of several transition States provide good examples of how failure to implement basic structural commitments can contribute to market collapse and related social problems. Therefore, the establishment of the rule of law

² Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, Århus, Denmark, opened for signature 25 June 1998, ECE/CEP/43 (not yet in force) (hereafter “the Århus Convention”).

³ Helsinki Final Act, 1 August 1975, ‘Questions Relating to Security in Europe’, Article 1a, ‘Declaration on Principles Guiding Relations Between Participating States’, Principle X, para. 4.

and effective institutions needs to be a priority for transition States, a priority that must be encouraged and promoted by the OSCE.

Echoing the language of the Helsinki Final Act, it was further suggested in the Implementation Review Meeting that security is adversely affected by the growing gap in levels of development among the OSCE States. Regional and sub-regional programmes have an important role to play in fostering close economic co-operation in order to narrow this problematic gap. The OSCE should therefore offer political support and in-the-field encouragement for such co-operation.

Overall, in spite of some cautionary notes focussed mainly on the desire to avoid duplication, the implementation review signalled a desire to see the OSCE become more active in the Economic Dimension. Participants in the meeting called for, inter alia, wider participation in Economic Dimension seminars, increased resource commitment to the Economic Dimension, significant incorporation of Economic Dimension considerations in the forthcoming Charter for European Security, the negotiation of a new “Bonn Document” setting forth norms and commitments relevant to current risks and challenges in the economic sphere, and more frequent consideration of Economic Dimension issues by the Permanent Council. All of these goals, shared to differing degrees among participating States, signal a realization of the important relationship that economic commitments have to security and stability in the OSCE region. In sum, the work and participation leading up to and including the Economic Forum stimulated a sharper, stronger commitment to the Economic Dimension and resulted in the articulation of specific goals, particularly pertaining to security-related environmental problems.

The Working Groups

This year’s Economic Forum consisted of the Implementation Review Meeting, an Opening Plenum, three Working Groups, and a closing Plenum. In addition, there was a special,

informal Working Group on “Environmental Security”. All of these Groups had several “lead speakers,” designated in advance, who delivered short remarks designed to stimulate and focus the discussion within each Group.

As the name of the special, informal Working Group suggests, it considered the overall topic of this year’s Economic Forum. The special, informal Working Group focused on assessing the OSCE’s role in the environmental area and making suggestions for concrete OSCE action. The discussion was based largely on a report, issued by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s (NATO) Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society, entitled “Environment and Security in an International Context.”⁴ The discussions and recommendations of the special, informal Working Group echoed many of those that emerged from the preparatory seminars and the ordinary Working Groups at the Forum itself, and affirmed the role of the OSCE in the environmental area. The Rapporteur’s report for the special, informal Working Group noted correctly the consensus which emerged in this Group that the “OSCE has an important role to play in serving as a facilitator and co-ordinator of environmental and economic activities as a means to provide early warning, conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation in the region.”⁵

Working Group A: Energy and the Environment. The topic of this Working Group ensured continuity with the 6th Economic Forum, which had focused on the security aspects of energy developments in the OSCE area. There is a clear connection between energy and security. Energy is a strategic commodity, and it is important that countries have secure and reliable sources of energy. However, energy consumption has immediate impacts on the environment. “Global demand for energy continues to rise sharply, and there is a clear link between energy exploration, production, distribution and consumption, and environmental damage. This damage

⁴ NATO Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society, ‘Environment & Security in an International Context’, Final Report March 1999, Report No. 232.

⁵ Rapporteur’s Report, Special, Informal Working Group on “Environmental Security”, EF.DEL/87/99, 28 May 1999, pg. 1.

diminishes environmental capacity, and often also has an immediate impact on human health and quality of life.”⁶ Nuclear power, for example, presents environmental risks both in terms of potential accidents and in terms of waste disposal. The Chernobyl accident and the contamination of the Aral Sea stand as just two poignant examples. Transport pollution from cars and ships also presents environmental hazards. Emissions from fossil fuels are contributing to climate change⁷, which presents an unquestionable security threat to coastal nations. And the depletion of non-renewable natural resources threatens to create tensions both in the future and immediately, particularly where such depletion involves transboundary issues.

One of the fundamental desiderata postulated by the OSCE is economic development, together with the establishment of free market economies and the legal and social structures necessary to support them. These terms mean different things to different States, of course, and one of the factors that rendered discussion in this Group particularly animated was these different understandings of apparently common terminology, and of the OSCE commitments which are based on this terminology.

Socio-economic growth generally translates into increased energy consumption and waste production. It is therefore essential that energy demands “be balanced against the necessary consequences for the environment of increasing supply.”⁸ If economic growth is to be balanced with environmental sustainability, the principles of sustainable development outlined in the UN’s Agenda 21 will have to be implemented, along with the emissions standards of the Kyoto Protocol to the UN’s Framework Convention on Climate Change.⁹ In order for that

⁶ Rapporteur’s Report, Working Group A, EF.DEL/91/99, 28 May 1999, pg. 1.

⁷ “In the longer term the most challenging environmental issue will be climate change...Concerning the scale of the challenge, energy-related CO₂ emissions in International Energy Agency (IEA) countries increased by 7% between 1990 and 1996. Longer-term projections suggest a rising trend. The latest World Energy Outlook projects that, unless stringent new policies are implemented, global emissions of carbon dioxide from the energy sector will rise by 70% from 1995 to 2020. By 2010, energy-related CO₂ emissions in [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development] OECD countries could be approximately 30% above the 1990 levels. Closing this large gap between the projected emission increases and the commitments made in Kyoto is a formidable challenge.” Mr. Odd S. Haraldsen, Energy Counsellor, The Norwegian Mission to the European Union, Statement to Working Group A, EF.DEL/32/99, 26 May 1999, pg. 8.

⁸ *Supra* n. 6.

⁹ As stated in the European Commission Communication entitled “Energy Policy with an Environmental Approach”, “The environmental challenges of the 21st century and the need to fulfil the Kyoto commitments on emissions reduction make it imperative for the European Union to develop and implement sustainable energy

balance to be achieved, energy production and consumption must become more efficient. This is not an area of activity which is normally associated with the OSCE, but there is nothing to prevent representatives of OSCE participating States from taking these and other recommendations back to their capitals and implementing them on a national basis.

In addressing the issue of efficiency, the Working Group suggested that “pricing energy at its full cost would allow greater efficiency both in consumption and production.”¹⁰

Introduction of market mechanisms, removal of subsidies, and the use of energy or carbon taxes can all be effective means of improving efficiency. Furthermore, many participants in this Group – especially those representing the NGO community -- suggested that States should take environmental consequences and costs into account not only when formulating national energy policies, but in all decision making. If such steps are taken, the result is likely to be increased use of renewable energy sources, which the Working Group stressed as an important and necessary goal. It may also make energy efficient technology more competitive in the marketplace.

The Working Group also emphasized the importance of technology transfers and the sharing of best practices. Creating environmentally sound energy policies and practices clearly requires that States help one another and co-operate in information-sharing. In this regard, it is also important that States accurately and rapidly report any environmental damage which could potentially effect a neighboring State. Open dialogue and willingness to co-operate are imperative if environmental problems are to be solved and conflict is to be avoided. The OSCE has much to contribute in this regard, given its experience in capacity building and facilitating co-operation.

If the principles of sustainability and co-operation are to be realized, and environmental threats to security thereby minimized, people may need to change their consumption patterns. It

policy. ‘Business as usual’ is no longer an option” (European Commission, ‘Energy Policy with an Environmental Approach’, Brussels, 14 October 1998, IP/98/890). This is true not only for the European Union (EU), but for all the OSCE participating States and beyond.

¹⁰ *Supra* n. 6, at 2.

is therefore important that consumers, governments, and businesses all be educated on these issues and learn to take environmental criteria into account in all decision-making. Referred to as “mainstreaming” by the Working Group, this kind of integration is necessary if the OSCE States are going to co-operate in achieving sustainability and averting conflict over environmental issues related to energy demand and consumption.

Finally, the Working Group noted that some of the OSCE participating States have legal obligations under, inter alia, the Energy Charter and the Protocol on Energy Efficiency and Related Environmental Aspects. This year’s Economic Forum urged the OSCE to play a more active role in encouraging implementation of legal obligations in the environmental field. Close co-operation by the OSCE with other international organizations and Convention Secretariats would be an important step in achieving fuller implementation of such international obligations.

Working Group B: Security Aspects of Shared Water Resources and Regional Co-Operation. It

is widely known that water resource management is an important and vital international issue. Agenda 21 addresses the matter of sustainable water use, and the UN has declared March 22 to be International Water Day.¹¹ Transboundary water issues also raise security concerns on several fronts. First, water pollution by an upstream State can have severe consequences for a downstream State’s water supply. Second, in regions such as Central Asia, there are real water shortages. “Experts predict that with existing levels of water consumption and with the current approaches to water management there will be constant water shortages, especially in regions with high population densities. The consumption of water is doubling every ten years, and that trend will continue.”¹² As water becomes an even scarcer resource, it is obvious that equitable and co-operative approaches to management of transboundary water flows are necessary if conflict is to be avoided. While it may be true that only a few transboundary water issues will directly lead to armed conflict, “tensions may arise from political, ethnic, cultural, and religious

¹¹ Mr. Yerlan Idrissov, First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Keynote Address to the Opening Plenum, EF.DEL/41/99/Corr.1, 26 May 1999, pg. 1.

differences as well as economic instability and find expression in the context of shared water resources such as through acts of international terrorism.”¹³

The issue discussed by this Working Group is not limited, however, to a few States or regions. As Ambassador Temel Iskit, one of the lead speakers for this Working Group, stated,

It is estimated that there are about 215 river basins in the world which cross international borders. Also according to these estimates, nearly fifty countries have seventy-five percent or more of their total land area...within these basins and approximately thirty five to forty percent of the world population [lives therein]. As the scarcity of water becomes more obvious due to population growth and as the environmental problems which do not respect national boundaries come more to the fore, nations are looking for means of increased co-operation regarding the common use, protection and management of these water courses...¹⁴

In Central Asia, water shortages are exacerbated by additional problems. These include the reduction of water supply due to climate change, the loss of water as a result of outdated irrigation equipment, inefficient water distribution systems, and drainage-free systems of water supply. In addition, large quantities of untreated sewage are being discharged into existing water supplies.¹⁵ And there are tragedies such as the Aral Sea environmental crisis, with the staggering destruction of natural habitat due to unsustainable development practices.¹⁶ As is the case with respect to energy efficiency, the Working Group concluded that it is important for States to use market mechanisms, including real pricing, to correct some of these unsustainable

¹²Id.

¹³ Rapporteur's Report, Working Group B, EF.DEL/90/99, 28 May 1999, pg. 1.

¹⁴ Mr. Temel Iskit, Ambassador of Turkey to the Czech Republic, Statement to Working Group B, EF.DEL/8/99/Corr.1, 25 May 1999, pg. 1.

¹⁵ Mr. Yrysbek Malenov, Co-ordinator of the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) Office of the Kyrgyz Republic reported in his speech that 23% of the water in the region is lost due to inefficiencies and outdated equipment and systems. He estimated that 1/3 of the sewage discharged into surface water basins was not treated. And he reported that it is estimated that climate change will lead to a 25-35% reduction in water supply from mountain freeze by the year 2025. EF.DEL/78/99, 27 May 1999, pg. 1.

¹⁶ “As a result of the intervention in question (over a period of almost 40 years), the Aral Sea's surface area has decreased by a factor of two and its water volume by a factor of four; the water level has fallen by more than 17 metres, the hardness of the water has increased by a factor of three and the shoreline has receded 50-70 kilometers. The Aral Sea is no longer important from the point of view of fishing and transport. The uncovered seabed, which is saturated with poisonous chemicals and with salts, has become a source of dust storms (each year, up to 100 million tons of salt-containing dust are thrown up into the atmosphere). The danger of a profound transformation of climatic processes affecting plant and animal life on a global scale is becoming very real. The situation is deteriorating also as a result of the discharge of sewage and effluent from human settlements into the river. The existence in the river's water-conservation zone of various kinds of pollutants is contributing to an increase in the degree of chemical and bacterial contamination of the river, which is automatically leading to the pollution of sources of drinking water (surface and underground) and to increased morbidity in the population.” *Supra* n. 11.

practices. States must also share best practices and exchange technological know-how as an important step in co-operating to manage these transboundary water issues.

Transboundary water issues obviously require inter-State and/or regional solutions. The Working Group emphasized that co-operative approaches offer the only solution to transboundary water problems and the only means of preventing conflict related to those issues. Several examples of already existing regional arrangements were put forward in the Working Group. An International Fund for the Rescue of the Aral Sea has been set up to promote co-ordinated management of the Aral Sea and its environmental problems. It was suggested that “the establishment of the International Fund for the Rescue of the Aral Sea should be regarded as a large-scale example of a co-operative approach to the management of water resources.”¹⁷ The Interstate Council of the Central Asian Union was cited as another example. Similarly, the Danube Riparian Countries have established the Environmental Programme for the Danube River Basin and the Danube Accident Emergency Warning System (AEWS). The Mediterranean States have also exhibited a willingness and ability to co-operate. They have concluded six protocols and have set up the Mediterranean Action Plan as a means of promoting further co-operation. This list is not comprehensive, but it demonstrates that States are willing to join together to deal with issues which cannot successfully be handled any other way. The OSCE has a significant role to play in encouraging inter-State and regional co-operation on transboundary issues, in developing principles for the equitable sharing of water resources, and in promoting the full and rapid implementation of these principles.

A fairly large body of legal agreements exists with respect to shared water resources. Mr. Kaj Barlund, Director of the Environmental and Human Settlements Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), reported that “some 150 international – bilateral and multilateral – agreements exist in Europe and North America on the protection and use of transboundary waters. However, not all of Europe’s transboundary waters are covered,

¹⁷ Id. at 4.

and some of the agreements are outdated.”¹⁸ Among the multilateral agreements is the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. This Convention and other instruments, such as the Valencia Water Tribunal, offer tools for preventing and resolving conflict. Under Article 9 of this UNECE Convention, for example, States are obligated “to enter into bilateral or multilateral agreements or other arrangements, on the basis of equality and reciprocity, in order to define their relations and conduct regarding the prevention, control and reduction of transboundary impact. Such agreements must provide for the establishment of joint bodies, covering well-defined catchment areas.”¹⁹ In this Group, both governmental and non-governmental participants agreed that it is imperative that States work together in this manner to agree on how to share water resources equitably and how to co-operate to protect those resources.

Perhaps even more important than the texts of the legal instruments, however, is the process of developing them. In this regard delegates to the Working Group emphasized two things. First, the process of developing legal instruments must be co-operative. “Political will must be joint, and...parties must have a shared vision of how the water resources will be managed and monitored.”²⁰ This is particularly important for agreements between upstream and downstream countries. Second, as non-governmental representatives and representatives of some of the OSCE’s “partner” organizations pointed out repeatedly, it is imperative that the process of formulating such agreements involve as many stakeholders as possible.

The OSCE can contribute to consensus-building with respect to establishing rules and principles for managing transboundary water issues. Transboundary water issues require co-operative action among and between States. The OSCE can add significant value to the process of negotiating and formulating agreements and improving the networks of co-operation within the OSCE region. It can also further promote and encourage the implementation of legal and

¹⁸ Mr. Kaj Barlund, Director of the Environmental and Human Settlements Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Statement to Working Group B, EF.DEL/63/99, 27 May 1999, pg. 7.

¹⁹ *Id.* at 5.

²⁰ *Supra* n. 13, at 2.

political obligations already accepted by the participating States, and facilitate mediation when differences arise. The regional and bilateral agreements and programs that already exist present encouraging signals and models as to how transboundary water issues can be peacefully and co-operatively handled. The OSCE can add significant political impetus to the continuation and expansion of that process throughout the OSCE region.

Working Group C: Public Participation: No discussion of environmental sustainability would be complete without considering the role of public participation. This is particularly true of a discussion aimed at the nexus between environment and security. The notion behind public participation is that broad-based involvement of all stakeholders in environmental decision-making is a basic right, in the context of a democracy, and that it yields better decisions and increases the level of public support for the resulting policies. This clearly has implications for security, then, as it reduces the bases for dissatisfaction among stakeholders affected by environmental policy decisions and helps build a more vital civil society, one of the underpinnings of stable democracies.

Public participation in environmental decision-making helps to ensure that both the process and the outcome are fair and transparent. Several elements are essential to that process.²¹ The public must have access to information. Providing public education and making information available are important initial steps. But national law must ensure that the public has a legal right to relevant environmental information, over and above any benevolent impulses of government officials. It is also essential that there be broad-based participation in the decision-making process. This means, for example, that NGOs, the business sector, academic institutions and the public at large must all be involved in the process. Input from so many segments of society will increase the pool of ideas and thus lead to higher quality decisions. If public participation is to have a genuine impact, the interaction with the public must begin early

²¹ Mr. Jeremy Wates, European Environmental Bureau, Keynote Address, Opening Plenum, EF.DEL/15/99, 25 May 1999, pg. 2-3.

in the decision-making process and must continue throughout. So, for example, initial drafts of legislation should be made available to the public for input at an early enough stage for the input to actually be taken into account. The internet would be a useful means for facilitating this process, at least for those who have access to it. It is also extremely important that the entire decision-making process be transparent and accessible to the public. A final component that must be available is access to justice. Interested stake holders must have the ability to challenge the decision-making process or its outcome in a legal context.

These principles are embodied in the Århus Convention²², signed by 39 countries and the European Community since June 1998. The Working Group emphasized the importance of accession to the Århus Convention and implementation of its obligations. These principles are considered so important that it was suggested that they be incorporated into the (still-in-progress) Charter on European Security and/or the Declaration of the upcoming Istanbul Summit. The Working Group also recognized that the OSCE needs to do more to incorporate the principles of public participation in its own practices. In particular, NGO participation in seminars should be even more actively facilitated and NGOs should be kept informed of the OSCE's environmental objectives. It was also recognized that co-operation with other intergovernmental organizations is important to ensuring that there is broad public awareness about the Århus Convention ratification and implementation progress. No delegation publicly disagreed with these assertions, although many of them were made more vigorously by representatives of the NGO community and/or international organizations than by governmental representatives.

In his speech to the Working Group, Professor Bedrich Moldan stressed the importance of instilling a sense of individual responsibility in communities and individual citizens. He stated that, "the first and most important task is to enhance knowledge of the principles of sustainable development in everyday life and their incorporation into people's value systems."²³

²² *Supra* n. 2.

²³ Professor Bedrich Moldan, Statement to Working Group C, EF.DEL/5/99/Corr.1, 25 May 1999, pg. 1.

Combined with such a sense of responsibility, public participation in a transparent decision-making process promises to have broad impacts on the quality and fairness of environmental decision-making. Implementation of these principles creates a link between the environment and democratization, strengthening the framework of civil society. The direct benefits to the environment, and thus to the economy, as well as the longer term effects of strengthening democracy and improving public support for policy decisions, all have the effect of improving security and preventing conflict. Clearly, then, the OSCE has a vested interest in encouraging the translation of these principles into practice.

Summary: Major Themes and Recommendations

From the preparatory seminars and the Economic Forum, a number of thematic recommendations for action by the OSCE and the participating States emerged. One of the major themes repeated throughout the year was the need for increased co-operation among States, particularly regional co-operation with regard to such issues as transboundary water management. It was emphasized that the OSCE has significant value to add to the process of forming co-operative approaches to environmental problems. A second theme that received a great deal of attention was that of public participation and access to information. As indicated above, these principles are contained in the Århus Convention, and it was therefore stressed that the OSCE should encourage States to ratify and implement the Convention. It was further recommended that the principles of the Århus Convention be incorporated into the forthcoming Charter on European Security and Istanbul Summit Declaration. Independent of the Århus Convention, but closely related, States were encouraged to provide public education on environmental issues and obligations, consistent with the relevant provisions of the Helsinki Final Act. Such an informational base will increase public awareness and the ability of citizens to hold their governments accountable for fulfilling environmental commitments.

Delegates also emphasized the important complementary role that NGO's play as key institutions of civil society. The OSCE was called upon to encourage political support for and technical training of NGO's. In addition, it was noted that the OSCE should itself do more to facilitate the role of NGO's in OSCE seminars and other fora. Broad-based dialogue is essential to the OSCE principles of co-operation. Not only NGO's, but all stakeholders, whether as individuals or as groups, should have increased representation in the dialogues taking place within the OSCE region concerning environmental security. Businesses, parliamentarians, academics, and NGO's should all be encouraged to participate, and their involvement should be facilitated by the OSCE.

Echoed throughout the Economic Forum this year was the idea that the OSCE should strengthen its co-operation with other organizations, including, in particular, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). From the many statements made about this, it appeared that the desire for closer cooperation was reciprocal. Increased dialogue and improved co-operation will reduce overlap and allow each organization to contribute according to its comparative advantages, thus maximizing the effectiveness of their individual efforts and creating synergy in their collective efforts.

There was strong support among many delegates for an increased commitment to the Economic Dimension. A theme reiterated throughout the year called on States to integrate environmental concerns into all areas of policy formation, including finance, security, foreign policy, transport, agriculture, education, and others. Delegates called upon the OSCE to encourage this type of "mainstreaming". Furthermore, it was suggested that the OSCE should elaborate an "Environmental Code of Conduct", and consider the possibility of producing an updated "Bonn Document". Finally, the OSCE was urged to make economic and environmental concerns a more integral part of the OSCE activities and decisions by, for example, including the Economic Dimension as a regular agenda item of the PC meetings.

This list of themes and recommendations is not intended to be exhaustive. It does, however, demonstrate the commitment and focus that characterized the discussions at this year's Economic Forum. States are aware that environmental problems pose security threats, and their representatives at the Forum seemed to be committed to promoting co-operation and broad-based dialogue, and to increasing the attention given to environmental issues as a matter of course in the OSCE's work. It now remains to be seen whether the OSCE decision-makers in, for example, the Permanent Council and the Ministerial Council, will translate this sense of commitment into appropriate follow-up decisions.