

23rd OSCE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM  
“Water governance in the OSCE area – increasing security and stability through co-  
operation”  
CONCLUDING MEETING  
Prague, 14 – 16 September 2015

Closing Statement by Ambassador Antje Leendertse, Head of the Task Force for the  
2016 German OSCE Chairmanship, Federal Foreign Office, Germany

Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues,

Let me start by thanking our Czech hosts for having us here in this beautiful setting! I would also like to thank SG Lamberto Zannier, the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities Dr. Yigitgüden and his team as well as the Serbian Chairmanship for convening and organizing this meeting.

I want to thank all of you for doing the important work in the EEF 2015. Your work highlighted not only a very important topic but also the work of the OSCE as a mediator and the project work of the field missions which deserve visibility.

The Topic of the EEF cycle 2015, “water governance”, was well-chosen and very timely indeed.

The sustainable development goals that are to be adopted in the U.N. in September highlight the importance of the water issue in its many facets for international cooperation, and rightly so.

Water is the basis of life, of human development. Good water governance and international cooperation are becoming ever more important in times of climate change, population growth, and global trends in economic growth of emerging markets, in pollution and in changing patterns of consumption and production.

Even in times long before we spoke of “globalization”, a rules-based and cooperative approach to using common resources - for example rivers in border regions - was crucial for avoiding conflict.

Today, this becomes ever more important and we have to work hard towards good governance, transparency and Cross-border cooperation.

They form the basis for confidence between participating states and therefor for stability and security.

All of this makes “water governance” a highly relevant policy area for the OSCE and for our common goals and commitments.

Germany has been very active in water diplomacy for a number of years.

In 2008, we started the so-called Berlin Process on water issues in Central Asia. Just last week ago, we hosted another ministerial conference on this issue in the Foreign Office in Berlin.

Representatives of all five Central Asian states agreed to enter into the third phase of this Process (2015-2017). We linked this initiative to OSCE work and had Dr. Yigitgüden participate and speak in Berlin.

As incoming chair, we encourage the institutions and field missions to continue their work on water governance issues, and encourage participating states to strengthen cooperation in this field.

Dear Colleagues,

Good Governance issues will more generally be a focus of our plans for the Chairmanship 2016.

Generally, we want to strengthen the economic and environmental dimension in the OSCE because we feel that we could draw on its potential to a higher degree: for concrete work to the benefit of our societies and for deepening and restoring confidence among participating states.

Our work will, of course, be based on existing commitments that make up the framework of the 2nd dimension (Helsinki Final Act, the document of the Bonn conference of 1990, Maastricht strategy of 2003, work of the Group of Friends of the Second Dimension (2009)).

Within this framework, Germany will seek to highlight particularly the economic aspects of the 2<sup>nd</sup> dimension.

For the EEF cycle we have chosen the topic

“Strengthening Stability and Security through cooperation on good governance”

and the EEF decision mandates us to address three issues

- *Good governance as a basis for business interaction and good investment climate as well as for the fight against corruption, money-laundering and the financing of terrorism;*
- *Good migration governance to support stable economic development in countries of origin, transit and destination;*
- *Good environmental governance to enable sustainable economic development;”*

Good Governance and an economic angle on these issues will be the overarching theme to all the three.

What is true for water governance is true for other policy fields as well:

Good governance has implications for trust and confidence and thus for security and stability within and among participating states. It is also the basis of sustainable economic growth.

The dates for the two EEF preparatory meeting and next year's Forum in Prague have been decided upon:

- the 1<sup>st</sup> Preparatory meeting will be in Vienna: 25.-26. January 2016.
- the 2<sup>nd</sup> Preparatory meeting will take place in Berlin: 19.-20. May 2016.
- the Concluding Meeting in Prague will take place from 14.-16. September 2016.

The precise agenda of the first preparatory meeting in Vienna will be presented to the Economic and Environmental Committee in Vienna this autumn in close cooperation with the Office of the Coordinator for OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities.

Finally, I would like to frame the more general thinking in Berlin on the second dimension with a few outlines:

We would like to involve the business community more in the in the 2<sup>nd</sup> dimension work in order to make it more relevant.

We believe the business community has important views to share that can help participating States in conceptualizing economic policy and in tapping the potential of economic cooperation for their respective societies.

Their views can also help to take stock of existing barriers to sustainable connectivity and economic cooperation in the OSCE area.

“Connectivity” is a term which is used in many other multilateral contexts that deal with regional cooperation and cross-border infrastructure, for example in ASEM, ASEAN or in the context of the Western Balkans as part of the so called “Berlin Process” which we launched in 2014 and which just saw the second summit, in Vienna this August.

The way we understand it, “Connectivity” is a key-word for the connection between economic exchange, economic policy, trust, stability and security.

And we believe, it can be a key term for better economic exchange between participating States.

We start from the assumption that participating States continue to share an interest to stay engaged in dialogue on economic matters in order to strive for better living conditions for their societies and for better cooperation and security vis-à-vis their neighbors.

Perhaps in this context it would also be helpful to look beyond the borders of the OSCE eastwards.

Trade and economic exchanges are of course already taking place across the OSCE area, predominantly so in rules-based ways. But we would give an impetus to deeper discussion on how to further practically improve them, and involve the business community for that.

We are therefore thinking of organizing a Chairmanship Event that involves the business community and could address issues of “Connectivity”:

For example: issues of transport infrastructure, issues in border and customs administration, and other practical and policy issues which are all relevant to foreign

investment, trade, economic growth as well as for combatting corruption and other aspects of good governance in the OSCE space

We want to highlight these issues from a practical and results-oriented point of view.

This would go hand in hand with projects that are already being carried out by OSCE field missions, for instance on trade facilitation or anti-corruption.

We should use the OSCE's trade mark of being a forum for exchange of experiences with a broad membership better than in the past to advance dialogue on how economic governance can be improved.

Dear Colleagues,

Everyone knows these are challenging times and there is only so much that the Chairmanship country can do.

Having said that:

We will do our very best to help renewing and rebuilding dialogue, trust and security. And we want to have this dialogue also in the second dimension, and to use the second dimension for that dialogue.

The incoming chairmanship is looking forward to working with you, on the second dimension as well as the other dimensions and on the crucial regional issues in the OSCE.

Thank you.