

ENGLISH only

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Panel-The role of the OSCE: Follow up to the 15th Economic and Environmental Forum

Statement by Peter Svedberg, Project Manager UNDP Bratislava Regional Center

Thank you Mr. Chairman, muchos gracias also to our hosts in the Spanish Chairmanship and here in Zaragoza, and also to the staff of the Office of the Coordinator for the excellent organisation and facilitation of this conference.

Ladies and gentlemen,

For the Environment and Security Initiative, water resource management is a central theme in all the sub-regions where we operate. The partnership has identified the potential of water issues to be one of the major forces to address environmental and security risks, and to build cooperation.

It is not surprising, since water security is an integral part of the broader conception of human security. It is about ensuring that every person has reliable access to enough safe water at an affordable price to lead a healthy and productive life, while maintaining the ecological systems that provide and depend on it.

In the foreword of the 2006 Human Development Report, the UNDP Administrator Kemal Dervis speaks of a “Global Water Crisis”. At the start of the 21st century, unclean water is the world’s second biggest killer of children. Every year, 1,8 million children perish due to deprivation of water and sanitation. Every day, millions of women and young girls collect water for their families, reinforcing gender inequalities in employment and education. It is clear from this that the hackneyed word crisis is not an exaggeration in this context.

This global water crisis is sometimes labelled as a crisis of absolute shortage of water quantities. The 2006 HDR rejects this view as a starting point for analysis. Instead, the report traces the roots of the water crisis to poverty, inequality and unequal power relationships, as well as flawed water management policies that exacerbate scarcity. The report draws the conclusion that there is more than enough water in the world for domestic purposes, for agriculture and for industry. The problem is that some people – notably the poor – are systematically excluded from access by their poverty, by their limited legal rights, or by policies limiting the access to infrastructures providing water for life and livelihoods. In short, scarcity is manufactured through political processes and institutions that disadvantage the poor.

While it is true, as has been mentioned during the course of these two days, that water scarcity has been a source of cooperation rather than tension, there are also two trends that the 2006 HDR identifies in the patterns of competition over water resources: first, as urban centres and industry increase their demand for water, agriculture is losing out. Second, also within agriculture, competition is intensifying. Thus, there is future potential of conflict unless people's livelihoods are secured through pro-poor development.

While the report is a global one, these conclusions are general and also valid for the OSCE region. One of the main development challenges that we identified for the region is the mainstreaming of environmental issues into other policy agendas. Water management policies provide an opportunity to build partnerships to that end. The role of the OSCE in this respect is absolutely crucial:

- It can raise the political awareness of environment and security issues and provide a platform for Foreign policy to take environmental issues into account;
- The OSCE stands for securing peace and democracy in politically sensitive areas, working with and through Ministers of Foreign Affairs to achieve these goals. This makes you a natural partner and ally in addressing environmental problems in areas of tension.
- The field presences with highly competent staff on the ground identify and implement activities that make a difference. This also allows for a wider implementation basis. The ENVSEC partnership allows us and the partners in implementation to be opportunistic in this way: if the UNDP CO in a country de-prioritises the environmental issues, the OSCE FM could potentially pick up the issue (provided they have the mandate), or vice versa, thereby increasing our opportunities to have important activities implemented in the partnership.

I also recall the specific recommendation to OSCE member states by our partner countries at our ENVSEC Advisory Board meeting in October last year to use ENVSEC as a mechanism to channel resources to activities for their capacity building.

The discussion yesterday briefly touched upon the issue of duplication. This is another one of ENVSEC's "raison d'être" – to ensure that the activities are part of a coherent process, coordinated between the international organisations, increasing the efficiency of the resources used for two reasons: first because we know better what we are doing, since the activities are spawned out of the ENVSEC assessments, and secondly we are coordinating between ourselves to ensure that the individual activities are carried out in line with our comparative advantages, and that the results of these activities feed into each other instead of overlapping each other. The emphasis in the UN reform documents on mainstreaming environmental issues into overall policy frameworks, on linking security and development, and on better coordination and partnerships among donors and international organisations illustrates why ENVSEC is important as a partnership.

The coordination with other constituencies active in our region is another issue that is high on our agenda in ENVSEC. Ensuring that regional bodies such as the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination in Central Asia, processes such as the Caspian

Environmental Programme, and GEF activities are involved in our coordination is a priority for the UNDP Chairmanship.

I would like to give you a few examples of the concrete activities we are or will be implementing through the ENVSEC Initiative, without going into significant details. We yesterday listened to several examples of projects with impressive concrete results that are coordinated with or through the ENVSEC Initiative. I won't repeat that, but other examples include:

assessing the condition of trans-boundary aquifers in the South Caucasus region. In addition, ENVSEC supported the creation of a NGO forum in the river basin, establishing a charter and facilitating the NGO cooperation in the Southern Caucasus countries. A further proposal that ENVSEC may support is the initiation of a process to develop a preliminary legal and institutional framework for coordination of regional action for the protection of the Kura-Aras basin environment. This aims to provide the basis for future negotiations for a lasting agreement and institution structure in the basin. The connection to the project on "South Caucasus River Monitoring" that William Hanlon will speak about in a minute can be ensured thanks to the ENVSEC Initiative.

The ENVSEC process in the Amu-Darya River Basin is in its starting blocks, and in the coming years it will be a major focus of the efforts of the ENVSEC partnership. Our ambition is to undertake a detailed assessment of water management and quality situation in the upper Amu-Darya river basin with a particular focus on the environment and security implications of projected developments as well as on identifying opportunities to strengthen basin-wide cooperation around common issues.

However, we could do much more, if we have stronger support from all sides: partner countries, the ENVSEC is an inherently demand-driven process; donor countries, to add to our much strained resources for our activities; and the respective governing bodies of our own organisations. And that support needs to be financial as well as political.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen for your attention, and I would like to take this opportunity to offer this copy of the 2006 HDR to the Coordinator. I am sure that you will find it interesting and relevant for the work that you and your staff are engaged in.