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**ADDRESS BY
THE CHAIRMAN-IN-OFFICE, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
H.E. MIGUEL ÁNGEL MORATINOS AT THE PLENARY SESSION
OF THE SECOND PREPARATORY CONFERENCE TO THE 15th
OSCE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM**

**Key challenges to ensure environmental security and sustainable
development in the OSCE area: Water management**

Zaragoza, Spain, 12 March 2007

Authorities of the Autonomous Communities,
Local authorities,
Ambassadors,
Delegates from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I should like to welcome you to the city of Zaragoza, where we have gathered to share our thoughts and experiences at the Preparatory Conference to the 15th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum. This Conference, which is being organized under the auspices of the Spanish Chairmanship, is dedicated to environmental security and sustainable development in the OSCE area, with a special emphasis on water management.

It is no accident that Aragon and the city of Zaragoza, with their long history of water conservation, management and treatment, are the venue for this forum, which serves as an opening act of sorts for the International Exposition on Water and Sustainable Development. The capital of Aragon will be a global reference point in the twenty-first century in terms of the prospects for this essential and scarce resource, given the uncertain future.

Expo-Zaragoza 2008, with its focus on water and sustainable development, is planned as an international meeting at which participants will analyse water resources, their management, treatment, study and culture against the backdrop of climate change. Here in this city people will be addressing vital issues that highlight water's importance as a geo-strategic element in sustainable human development and the co-operation that is needed to face this global challenge. The effects of climate change and sustainable development are issues that are assigned high priority and urgency on the international agenda today, both at the European and Mediterranean levels and within multilateral organizations and the United Nations system.

The Spanish Chairmanship will devote greater attention to the second dimension of the OSCE because sustainable development and environmental protection, along with the generation of renewable or green energy sources, are more necessary today than ever before. As you know, this is a central focus of the latest meeting of the Council of the European Union and a goal of European Union countries and those of us that have signed the Kyoto Protocol. We must achieve the objectives of this historic agreement to ensure the future of the European Union. By 2020 we need to be generating 20 per cent of our production output using clean energy sources in order to reduce pollution related to consumption.

At the First Preparatory Conference to the 15th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, which took place in Kyrgyzstan, the topics of discussion were land degradation and soil contamination, processes that are closely linked to water management and climate change. These effects are already a reality, as reflected in the reports of international organizations and groups of experts, which see them as part of an irreversible phenomenon on a global scale. Changes in the climate point directly to human activity and above all to development that ignores environmental ramifications.

The international community has recognized that security today goes beyond traditional approaches and is broadening its focus to include new areas of concern and interest to the OSCE participating States and partner countries. We need to tackle the challenges of climate change and the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems, which can be met only through co-operation, because there is much more at stake than degradation of the natural environment. Security is also at risk.

The overuse of resources and alteration of the natural environment have given rise to differences and conflicts in the past, but today we need to overcome them by means of concerted political and diplomatic efforts, through effective remedial measures and also through the exchange of science and technology, coupled with international co-operation in the development sphere. These are issues that will be addressed within the framework of Expo-Zaragoza 2008.

The Scientific Committee on Climate Change has warned us of the most immediate and visible consequences of damage to the environment. The symptoms are: global warming, a decline in water resources, loss of ecosystems, shrinking of coastlines and soil erosion, as well as intensification of natural phenomena such as hurricanes, prolonged droughts and torrential rains.

It stands to reason that climate change will have a decisive impact on security, on our economies, societies and cultural transformations. Instead of becoming a source of tension or conflict, however, climate change could be a powerful stimulus for a political commitment to broaden dialogue and promote the achievement of consensus, to deepen these efforts and to promote the modernization and reform of multilateral systems and organizations.

These challenges urgently require political will on the part of the international community and the adoption of measures that will minimize climate change and expand our capacity to react to these processes. Spanish communities such as Aragon recognize that we are on the front line in dealing with these effects, even though they can be felt throughout the entire planet.

We cannot allow the decline in precipitation, poor water management and progressive soil degradation to threaten food security in countries that have structures which are outdated and have little degree of cohesion. Co-operation within the OSCE and other international organizations should be extended to this realm, and also to the impact of climate on demographic processes and on migration flows.

Desertification and continuing droughts are hindering the sustainable development of agriculture and other sectors of the economy in areas of the Mediterranean, Asia and Africa. The situation is driving young people from their home countries in growing numbers as they flee poverty and emigrate to improve their prospects in life. Migration also has climatic and environmental causes that require a political and diplomatic dialogue, as well as the rapid adoption of agreements and urgent measures to respond to the demands of a globalized future.

The principal focus of the OSCE Conference in Zaragoza will be integrated water management, an environmental security challenge that also involves land degradation and soil contamination. Some political analysts predict that control of and access to water will be at the heart of future conflicts. Sustainable management of this asset that belongs to all mankind must encourage us to be more responsible and to make a commitment to open up new avenues for dialogue and the achievement of consensus.

In the OSCE area, the scarcity of water and water pollution threaten development in Central Asian countries. Many of them depend on melt-water and the scientific community tells us that in this region, as well as in Switzerland and Austria, glaciers are receding or disappearing and snowfall will decline in the future.

Ladies and gentlemen,

These thoughts bring to mind conflicts in which, as in the case of those in the Middle East, aquifer and underground reservoir water resources play an important role in feeding an escalating spiral of violence. In today's interdependent and globalized world the "butterfly effect", an expression coined in climate studies, has taken on renewed meaning and relevance because "the beating of the wings of a butterfly, no matter where it is, will be felt at the other end of the world".

The problems of security, and particularly the consequences of the uncontrolled use and abuse of environmental resources, cannot be isolated by a "*cordon sanitaire*" because nothing like that will be able to stop global warming, droughts or floods. We need not be alarmists, as James Lovelock, a climate geophysicist, has pointed out, but we do have to promote measures to mitigate the effects of climate change and work together following a global model for sustainable development that encourages even greater awareness and commitment among the international community.

The responses to these challenges and concerns require a concerted international effort, with collaboration of forums such as the OSCE and other multilateral organizations. I believe that the convening of the Zaragoza Conference will make the necessity and urgency of this approach clear.

This morning you heard an analysis of the development of international co-operation in water management, for which the OSCE has allocated resources in Central Asia. During

the following sessions there will be a discussion of good governance and sustainable water management, conflict prevention and the role played by sound management practices. Finally, emergency response and disaster prevention mechanisms will be examined.

I believe that it would be a real achievement for the OSCE, its participating States and partners for co-operation to contribute to the maintenance of security and to the establishment of security reinforcement mechanisms in the context of climate change and sustainable water use. We should draw on our own experience, since the OSCE has a track record in conflict prevention, in the development of confidence-building measures among neighbouring States and in the rational use of resources — as in the case of the Chu and Talas rivers, which are featured in the exhibition that accompanies this forum.

The Spanish Chairmanship supports an environmental security document for the OSCE area and we would like to take this opportunity to encourage the representatives of the Governments and States to collaborate on this undertaking, because it will lend weight to the reinforcement of goals supported by the Organization.

I believe that the hospitality of the people of Aragon, coupled with their tradition of and sensitivity to sustainable water management and development, will inspire our work. Without a doubt, these factors are also part of Expo-Zaragoza 2008, which is increasingly becoming an international symbol that reflects our commitment to mitigating climate change. Between 14 June and 14 September of next year, Spain, Aragon and Zaragoza will serve as an international platform for the dissemination of information and perspectives regarding the relationship between man and water and sustainable development.

Zaragoza will be a reference point for urgent co-operative action in regions that need drinking water and in the eradication of diseases related to unsafe drinking water. The research, technology and economic dimension will also be covered here, since sustainable development and institutional complexity do not make sustainable management more expensive, but rather turn it into an engine driving value-added activities and savings in terms of corrective environmental measures cushioning the effects of climate change. Within this context we should be talking not about stand-alone remedies, but about integrated solutions. Because this is a global and multi-faceted problem, we need to strengthen institutional relationships and create information and co-operation networks that can be put into place at Expo-Zaragoza 2008.

This city will become a showcase for water-related sectors of the economy, as well as those involving innovation, infrastructure, management systems, clean energy, and sanitation and treatment technologies. Zaragoza and the Community of Aragon are turning into world leaders in activities related to water management in agriculture, industry and the urban environment, as well as the relationship of water management to health and leisure.

The International Exposition has already received confirmation that 80 countries representing all of the world's eco-geographical regions are planning to attend and it is expected to welcome some 10 million visitors, who will have an opportunity to learn first-hand about best practices in water management and sustainable development strategies.

Authorities and ambassadors,
OSCE delegates and distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for your participation and your commitment, since solidarity is needed in order to manage climate change, water resources and sustainable development. These issues have been brought together here for the first time to clear up some of the uncertainties of the future and the process will most certainly be continued at Zaragoza-2008.

Thank you very much.