

23rd OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

ENGLISH only

Water Governance in the OSCE area-increasing security and stability through co-operation

Concluding Meeting

Prague, 13-16 September 2015

Opening statement

Armenia

Mr. Chairperson,

First we would like to thank the Serbian Chairmanship for guiding us through two preparatory meetings and setting the agenda of the Concluding Meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum.

We also appreciate efforts and ideas of the 2014 Swiss Chairmanship aimed at linking disaster reduction to water governance. We equally thank the Secretary General and Coordinator of the OSCE economic and environmental activities for their important contribution. Our thanks go also to the Czech Government for its consistent support to the Economic and Environmental Forum.

We have approached today's meeting with already elaborated discussions on the water governance particularly in its trans-boundary context and links with disaster risk reduction. Throughout two preparatory meetings we have already assessed the existing gaps in the context of international, regional and bilateral cooperation in water governance, the irreversible consequences of climate change on water resources, as well as comparative advantage of the OSCE as a security organization that, if duly utilized, can bring added value to the international cooperation in water governance. In this concluding stage of discussion, we expect to sum up our deliberations and identify way forward also through undertaking new commitments in water governance.

In our view, the OSCE as a political organization which deals with sensitive issues of political nature is well placed to assist participating states along with other stakeholders in cross border cooperation on the issues directly related to water governance and disaster risk reduction. We certainly welcome the emphasis of the concluding meeting on water governance in trans-boundary level and water diplomacy from the angle of OSCE possible involvement.

It is important that the OSCE approaches situations which cannot be resolved at bilateral level due to absence of normative framework of relations. The OSCE can address water governance and disaster risk reduction issues which became outstanding also due to certain difficulties of political nature. The OSCE's involvement in the ENVSEC initiative already provides important points of references particularly in the framework of regional and trans-boundary cooperation. The OSCE's

experience on dispatching fact finding missions is another important point of reference. Assessment, reduction and mitigation of climate change, along with other challenges in the realm of water governance, can create depoliticized and positive agenda for cooperation among parties to the conflict or states which do not have open borders. We firmly believe that the OSCE participating states should refrain from attempting to address water scarcity by unilateral actions on trans-boundary basin at the expense of other participating states who reside on the seemingly “wrong” side of the same river. We cannot allow the situation when water can be used as yet another means of unilateral coercive measure in the OSCE region.

In welcoming all participants to this event, we are looking forward to hear from participating states, academic community and civil society their opinions on further expanding the role of the OSCE in water governance.

Thank you