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**STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT DELEGATION  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS TO THE OSCE AT THE FIRST  
PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE 22<sup>nd</sup> OSCE ECONOMIC  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM**

Vienna, 27 and 28 January 2014

**Responding to environmental challenges with a view to promoting  
co-operation and security in the OSCE area**

**Opening session**

Mr. Chairperson,

First of all, allow me to thank the Swiss Chairmanship of the OSCE, the Secretary General, Mr. Lamberto Zannier, the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, Mr. Halil Yurdakul Yigitgüden, and the distinguished speakers for their thorough presentations, which set the necessary tone for the work of this preparatory meeting.

The annual Economic and Environmental Forum is a key event within the second basket of the OSCE and represents an important and necessary format for developing dialogue and co-operation between participating States on the most pressing issues of economic and environmental security.

We think that the focus of this year's OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum on the issue of preventing environmental threats to security is fully justified. The search for responses to these challenges becomes ever more important with each passing year.

Today's preparatory meeting represents a good opportunity to share experience and best practices on preventing catastrophes and natural disasters, rapid reaction to these challenges and managing the consequences of such events. It is also a chance to clarify the role of the OSCE and identify how it can make a specific contribution in this regard.

Belarus is prepared to play an active role in such work, and to share its expertise and experience. Experts from the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Belarus, who are practitioners in natural disaster prevention and management, are taking part in the current Forum.

We support further capacity-building in the economic and environmental dimension as a whole; it is an integral part of the OSCE concept of comprehensive and co-operative security. The issues of socio-economic development and environmental protection, including from the impact of natural and man-made disasters, have a direct effect on each and every individual, their quality of life and well-being. Further efforts by the OSCE in these areas can and should make a real, practical contribution to the sustainable development and stability of our countries.

We hope that the work of this Forum will prove to be precisely this targeted contribution to improving the security and quality of life of our citizens.

In conclusion, allow me to wish all participants in this meeting interesting and productive discussions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.