

28th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

“Promoting security, stability and economic growth in the OSCE area by preventing and combating corruption through innovation, increased transparency and digitalization”

CONCLUDING MEETING

Prague, 10-11 September 2020

Venue: Czernin Palace, Loretánské nám: 5, 118 00 Prague

via Zoom as well as physical attendance at the venue

Session III

Preventing and combating corruption in the field of natural resources and environmental protection

Friday, 11 September 2020, 09:30 – 11:00 hrs

SPEAKING NOTES

Keynote: Ambassador Hinrich Thölken

Director for Climate, Energy Policy and Digital Transformation,

Federal Foreign Office, Germany

Your Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- 2020 is a remarkable year, one of unprecedented risks and challenges. This year, the world was hit by an unprecedented pandemic: COVID-19.
- COVID-19 coincides with other crises. More and more societies are overwhelmed by dealing with the climate emergency and COVID-19 at the same time.

- At the beginning of this year, business leaders have again identified environmental and climate risks as the five greatest global risks, ahead of terrorist and cyber attacks. Among these risks are climate action failure, biodiversity loss and water crises.
- This is what the World Economic Forum's „Global Risk Report“ of 2020 tells us and has been telling us for years.
- Global environmental change has reached levels that endanger the foundations of life. This threatens our social and economic development and, increasingly, peace and security.
- The ongoing reckless exploitation of natural resources can lead to unrest and inequality, corruption and weak institutions stand in the way of the decisive action we need.
- Evidence-based policies and transparency therefore need to be at the heart of our response and we should strive towards good environmental governance at a global scale.

Global health and wildlife trafficking

- Although the exact transmission route of the novel coronavirus from animals to humans has not yet been conclusively researched, it is well documented that approximately 70% of known human infectious diseases¹ including HIV, Ebola, MERS and SARS, have a zoonotic origin (*i.e. originating in an animal host before spilling over to human populations*).
- The risk of new viruses emerging and of transmission from animals to humans is increased by certain human activities that therefore need to be addressed:
 - First, the destruction of habitats, the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems.
 - According to scientific research, there is a higher risk of animal-to-human transmission when ecosystems are thrown out of balance, such as by deforestation or the fragmentation of habitats.
 - Human intervention in ecosystems can change species composition in such a way that pathogens can spread more easily in animal populations.

¹ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported that 3 out of every 4 new or emerging infectious diseases in people come from animals.

The destruction of ecosystems, especially in the tropics and subtropics, increases the probability of contact between humans and pathogens.

- Preserving and restoring biodiversity and functioning ecosystems can make an important contribution to reducing the spread and risk of zoonoses.
- Second, we need to tackle illicit trafficking in wildlife more effectively. Trade – both legal and illegal – in wildlife and wildlife products can increase the risk of transmission of infectious diseases from animals to humans and their subsequent spread.
- This risk is greater in the case of the illegal trafficking of wildlife because both the origin and the transport routes are unknown and sanitary controls are absent.
- Illicit wildlife trafficking is one of the most lucrative illegal trades. It spreads corruption, is driven by organized crime and endangers the economic livelihoods of communities. It undermines the governance and security of entire societies. This problem has a truly global scale.
- The G20 leaders made the direct link between corruption and illegal wildlife trade very clear when they adopted the „High Level Principles on Combatting Corruption related to Illegal Trade in Wildlife and Wildlife Products“ at the G20 Summit under the German Presidency in Hamburg in 2017.
- Germany is one of the major donors in the fight against poaching and the illegal wildlife trade, with current funding of over 250 million Euros.
- Since 2015, at the initiative of Germany and Gabon and the UN Group of Friends on Wildlife, the UN General Assembly has so far adopted four resolutions on illicit trafficking in wildlife, with a broad number of co-sponsors from all geographic regions. A new resolution is due to be discussed at the Group’s upcoming meeting next year.
- Health risks associated with wildlife trade have so far not been a prominent focus of international policy. It could be added to the General Assembly’s wildlife resolution as a cross-cutting issue.
- The “Berlin principles”, the outcome document of the conference on „One Planet, One Health, One Future“ held in October 2019 in Berlin by the Federal Foreign Office in cooperation with the Wildlife Conservation Society, could serve as a point of departure. The principles highlight:

intact and functioning ecosystems are the decisive infrastructure for the life and health of all species on Earth, including our own.

Green Central Asia

- With “Green Central Asia” we focus on the security challenges that arise from climate change, including in the OSCE area.
- Central Asia is an important region for us, since the effects of climate change are already palpable: hydrological extremes are only one example. We also see the dire consequences of unsustainable resource exploitation in this region.
- The warming trends in these countries are much faster than in the global average. Glaciers have the crucial function of being water storages, but they are retreating.
- We want to understand more precisely, how climate change and the nexus between water, food and energy impact Central Asia and Afghanistan. Uncertainties can increase political tensions.
- “Green Central Asia” promotes scientific cooperation and evidence-based policies.

Climate and security foresight assessment

- Let me end my talk by sketching one innovative tool: The Global Climate Security Risk and Foresight Assessment. Personally, I value this project very highly. The Federal Foreign Office is developing this tool with international scientists and policy analysts from around the world.
- It seeks to address the existing gaps in climate security foresight, to ensure that diplomacy, development and defense strategies, policies and decision-making are better informed by an evidence-based analysis on climate change related security risks.

- The state-of-the art report will be released in 2023 and it will include policy recommendations, which we hope, will also be relevant for the OSCE's work.
- I would like to thank the Albanian chairmanship, especially for having made the environment a priority. I highly welcome their concept paper on Possible Ministerial Council Deliverables in the Economic and Environmental Dimension on "Protection of the Environment and the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources". Today is an excellent opportunity for us to deepen our conversation on these complex and pressing issues. And now – I look forward to our discussion! Thank you.