



United States Mission to the OSCE

**Opening Statement,
Second Preparatory Meeting,
2014 Economic and Environmental Forum**

As delivered by Nathan Jones
In Montreux, Switzerland
May 20, 2014

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We would like to thank the Swiss chairmanship and the Office of the OSCE Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Affairs for hosting the second preparatory meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum this week. Of course we all recognize the regrettable coincidence of the worst floods in many decades affecting Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Croatia this week. We extend our deepest condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives, and our concerns and thoughts with those who have lost homes and other valuables or who have been displaced or injured. We appreciate the quick action from the OSCE's field missions in Belgrade and in Sarajevo to provide assistance. The United States is providing rapid assistance to the region in several ways. We are providing a grant of USD 100,000 to the Red Cross in Serbia to help purchase needed supplies including rubber boats and other rescue equipment. To assist relief efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the United States has dispatched five trucks from Camp Darby in Italy, containing USD 700,000 worth of emergency relief supplies. We are also working with the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina to provide rapid technical assistance and maintenance support to ensure their rescue helicopters can continue to provide needed assistance in the ongoing rescue efforts. We encourage other participating States to contribute to these ongoing efforts as they are able.

In addition to providing emergency assistance to their host countries, I'm certain the OSCE Missions in Serbia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina are or will soon be turning their attention to the role the OSCE can and should play to prepare for and respond to events such as these. We are pleased to see a number of representatives from OSCE field operations, and we are particularly eager to hear from them today on ways the OSCE's field operations can contribute both to these discussions and to possible solutions and tools to address the impact of environmental challenges. But this is not a conversation solely for the field

operations, and we look forward to hearing from today's speakers on ways the OSCE at large can address these issues.

The first preparatory meeting in Vienna was an excellent beginning to our discussions and we are looking forward to deepening those discussions today. As we have stated before, one of our main challenges in this discussion is to look at the whole of disaster risk reduction and response, and decide where disasters have an appreciable impact on security. This question should not be confined just to this morning's opening session, but should be at the core of all our discussions this year.

The discussion on the linkage between climate change and disaster risk management is timely. It is important for communities to understand the risks they face that are associated with climate change, and then be able to plan accordingly so as to minimize disruption and to better prepare for the economic and social well-being of their communities.

The security aspects of disaster response are also critical and we are looking forward to hearing the speakers in the second session panel debate. It is particularly welcome to have the Deputy Director for Operations Service of the Conflict Prevention Center with us at the forum as a means to address the cross-dimensional nature of this topic.

Finally, we are looking forward to attending the field visits in Wednesday and thank the Swiss chairmanship for thinking creatively and providing the opportunity to see first-hand how disaster response is handled here in Switzerland. These discussions and experiences will play a vital role in our development and consideration of ways in which the OSCE can and should be involved in disaster preparedness and response. While we cannot prevent floods and other disasters from occurring, we can develop ways and tools that prevent such events from jeopardizing security across the OSCE.

Once again we thank the Swiss Chairmanship and the OSCE Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities for their hard work in organizing these sessions, and we look forward to the next two days.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.