



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

**Co-ordinator of OSCE
Economic and Environmental Activities**

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The 15th OSCE Economic Forum

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“Key challenges to ensure environmental security and sustainable development in the OSCE area: Land degradation, soil contamination and water management”

CLOSING REMARKS

(as prepared for delivery)

by Mr. Bernard Snoy, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

After two days of intense deliberations, I am pleased to welcome you at the closing session of the first part of the 15th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum.

I sincerely believe that our meeting achieved its main objective. The Forum built upon the existing OSCE experience in the area of environmental security and sustainable development and on the results of the preparatory Conference in Bishkek, which contributed a lot to identifying the OSCE's possible added value as far as addressing land degradation and soil contamination is concerned. As you know, my Office, in close co-operation with the Spanish Chairmanship, prepared a paper on the possible role of the OSCE in the follow-up to the 15th Economic and Environmental Forum. Many of the ideas mentioned in that Introductory Note were further discussed over the last two days and other suggestions were formulated. We are now closer to defining the role of the OSCE in the areas under discussion and to identifying concrete activities to be implemented in the future, to preparing a more comprehensive plan of action in follow up to the Forum.

After discussing these issues at a political level, in the framework of the Economic and Environmental Forum, I feel encouraged to continue working, together with our partners, in areas such as:

- Raising awareness, in partnership with other international organizations, on environmental security, and contributing to capacity building in Central Asia and other regions to enhance cross-border co-operation and sustainable land management; The OSCE could work to develop a toolbox of best practices of existing expertise on promoting environmental security;
- Promoting, in particular, environmental security in areas of tension as a tool of peace and confidence building and reconciliation between parties in conflict;

- Continuing good governance activities and try to give these efforts a renewed focus on environment;
- Co-operating with the Secretariat to the Aarhus Convention in order to improve its implementation by States Parties of the Convention. This can be done, e.g., via OSCE supported Aarhus Centres or via jointly organized workshops;
- Co-operate with the European Environment Agency to promote a better distribution of information and to ensure that duplication of efforts is avoided;
- Contributing to the collection and exchange of reliable international data on desertification and other aspects of land degradation and environmental security; training activities and seminars on desertification and other relevant issues related to environmental security could be organized, in co-operation with partners such as the UNCCD; Such activities could be envisaged in particular in Central Asia but also with the OSCE Partners for Co-operation.
- Assisting in raising political awareness on the social effects environmental degradation can have, such as environmentally induced migration, and facilitating scientific research on the link between environmental degradation and migration; We could envisage co-operation with academic and research institutions such as those present today;
- Promoting a more thorough implementation of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement in order to make sure that internally displaced people are given the adequate protection outlined in the Guiding Principles;
- Offering a platform for exchange of information, best practices and lessons learnt for actors involved in the remediation industry, particularly among participating States with common legacies in the mining sector;
- Increasing co-operation with organizations involved in promoting sustainable forest management, in particular by focussing on combating illegal logging and other phenomena associated with it, such as corruption, organized crime, etc; training and capacity building, including of local police forces in rural areas can be envisaged;
- Promoting a better interaction between all relevant stakeholders, including the business community and civil society, on issues related to environmental security and sustainable development; in that regard we could consider promoting the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, which have an environmental component, or develop joint activities together with UNIDO or EBRD.

My Office stands therefore ready to propose a number of activities and projects related to the above mentioned areas which could be presented and further discussed at the second part of the Economic and Environmental Forum in Prague in May. We have in mind capacity building initiatives, as well as initiatives for regional events with the intention to improve regional and sub-regional cooperation in the area of environment, and in particular land degradation and soil contamination. My Office stands ready to facilitate exchanges of experiences, best practices and information among interested participating States. My Office will also consult with the OSCE's Environment and Security Initiative partners as well as with other organizations such as the UNCCD, EEA, FAO, MCPFE, OECD etc. regarding the identification of future co-operation activities.

I also strongly encourage the Economic and Environmental Officers from the OSCE Field Presences to carefully consider the recommendations of this Forum when designing their plans for future activities. Such activities could be already planned and included in the budget proposals for 2008.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am looking forward to the next step in this year's Economic and Environmental Forum process, namely the second preparatory Conference, on 12-13 March, in Zaragoza, Spain, where we will discuss in detail issues related to water management. A Tentative Agenda for the Zaragoza Conference will be circulated soon.

Let me conclude by thanking all those who have worked hard behind the scene to make this Forum Meeting a success: the Spanish Chairmanship, the Conference Services, the Rapporteurs for each session, the interpreters and the staff of my Office. I would also like to express my thanks to the speakers and moderators who stimulated and facilitated our discussions, as well as to all of you, representatives of delegations to the OSCE and guests from capitals. The Economic Forum is and should be a joint effort; and I want to thank you all for your active participation, your comments and suggestions, as well as the ideas you put forward. We will take them into account when developing follow-up proposals. I am looking forward to working closely with you in that regard.

I would like to stress the importance I attach to the contribution of the OSCE Field presences. I am glad that many Economic and Environmental Officers participated in the Forum. My Office is constantly in touch with them and I am looking forward to their follow-up ideas. Their knowledge and expertise is invaluable to us.

I wish you a good and safe trip home and I am looking forward to meeting you again in Zaragoza or in Prague.

Thank you.