



To
**The Heads of all Permanent OSCE
Missions/Delegations
The Partners for Cooperation**

Vienna, 17.12.2013

Dear Colleagues,

In preparation for the first Preparatory Meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum (EEF) of the Swiss 2014 Chairmanship, taking place on 27th and 28th January 2014, I am circulating the attached "Background Paper of the incoming Swiss OSCE Chairmanship" to allow for the greatest level of preparation for delegations attending the meeting.

The theme of our EEF is "Responding to environmental challenges with a view to promoting cooperation and security in the OSCE area," with a focus on disaster risk reduction.

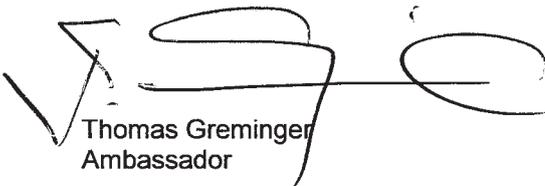
I would kindly ask you to forward this paper to any members of your delegation who will be attending the first PrepMeeting as well as the relevant experts in your capital, including your respective Hyogo Framework for Action Focal Point whom I recently wrote to you about. This Background Paper comprehensively addresses the issues which will be considered at the PrepMeeting, session by session, as well as raising questions which we deem important to discuss with your delegation and the distinguished speakers during this two-day meeting.

A draft annotated agenda with the list of speakers will follow after the Winter recess.

I look forward to a fruitful and animated discussion on this increasingly important topic from the offset of our 2014 EEF in January.

Yours sincerely,

The Permanent Representative



Thomas Greminger
Ambassador



Background Paper
of the incoming Swiss OSCE Chairmanship on the
First Preparatory Meeting of the
22nd OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum
“Responding to environmental challenges with a view to
promoting cooperation and security in the OSCE area”
Vienna, 27 - 28 January 2014

I. INTRODUCTION

This Background Paper is intended to provide participants with useful information for the first Preparatory Meeting of the 22nd Economic and Environmental Forum (EEF), to be held in Vienna on 27-28 January 2014.

For the 22nd Economic and Environmental Forum in 2014 (see Annex 1), the Permanent Council (PC) adopted the theme “Responding to environmental challenges with a view to promoting cooperation and security in the OSCE area” in its *Decision No. 1088 of 25 July 2013*.

The number of intense **natural hazard triggered disasters** (henceforth referred to as “natural disasters”) has increased since 1950 in every region of the world, sometimes devastating the lives and livelihoods of entire communities. Reduction of disaster risks will contribute to increased security and stability.

In 2013 a series of small- and large-scale disasters occurred which took **significant human, social and economic tolls**. Most prominent was the natural disaster linked to **Typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda** with thousands of casualties in the Philippines and where OSCE participating States have heavily contributed to relief efforts.

OSCE participating States and Partners for Cooperation have themselves been hit in 2013 *inter alia* by **geophysical** (e.g. earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides, mudslides), **meteorological** (e.g. cyclones, tornadoes, winter storms, dust storms), **hydrological** (e.g. floods), and **climatological** disasters (e.g. wildfires).

Natural disasters severely affect the security of nations and communities. There is a clear need to foster local, national and international capacities for mitigation and prevention, preparedness, forecasting and early warning, and response and recovery to natural disasters. Investing in disaster prevention, developing mechanisms for better assistance coordination, raising awareness of the population and increasing the resilience of nations and communities are topics best dealt with in an integrated, holistic approach to disaster risk management. Hence, the OSCE - with its comprehensive, cross-dimensional security concept - is a good platform to discuss this theme.

The agenda of the 22nd EEF will focus on the impact of the following topics on the comprehensive security of the OSCE area:

- Addressing preparedness, emergency response and recovery related to environmental challenges;
- Promoting partnerships and initiatives covering environment and security issues for greater preparedness for, resilience and adaptation to environmental challenges
- Exchanging good practices relating to preparedness, emergency response and recovery regarding environmental challenges;
- Promoting environmental good governance.

The discussions at the Forum will contribute to developing a common view on the role of the OSCE, as a security organization, in the whole disaster risk and crisis management cycle and on how to create synergies with other actors in this field.

The 1st Preparatory Meeting will focus primarily on the integrated disaster risk management approach (DRM; see Annex 2). This approach will be presented with a view to promote good practice sharing, partnerships and initiatives; to enhancing awareness; to build capacities in the field of DRM; and to encourage political leadership for disaster resilience.

The agenda of the Meeting takes into account **two types of sessions**:

1. Sessions with **input presentations** (max. 15 minutes/speaker, sessions I, II, and IV) to be followed by discussions among the speakers, OSCE participating States, Partners for Co-operation, OSCE institutions and field missions as well as civil society participants (see opening session, sessions I, II and IV).
2. Sessions with **panel debates** (see sessions III, V and concluding session). The panel debate formal interventions are limited to max. 5 minutes/panelist. The main objective of the panel debate is to enable a moderated interactive discussion among the panelists on outstanding questions. The active intervention of OSCE participating States, Partners for Co-operation, OSCE institutions and field missions as well as civil society participants (NGOs, private sector, academia) is strongly encouraged.

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II. SELECTED ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED

MONDAY, 27 JANUARY 2014

OPENING SESSION

Welcoming Remarks, Keynote Speeches and Opening Statements

The representative of the Chairperson-in-Office, the OSCE Secretary General and the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities will open this Preparatory Meeting and introduce the topic of responding to environmental challenges – focusing on natural disasters - with a view to promoting co-operation and security in the OSCE area.

Two Keynote Speeches will be delivered that focus on:

- Global long-term trends in natural disaster frequency, magnitude, spatial/temporal extent. Mapping of exposure, vulnerabilities and hazards in the OSCE region.
- Strengthening resilience to prevent the occurrence of natural disasters.
- Promoting integrated disaster risk management through capacity building in the OSCE region.

Delegations of OSCE participating States, OSCE Partners for Co-Operation as well as representatives of the civil society (private sector, NGOs, Think tanks, academia) are encouraged to take the floor after the keynote speeches in order to deliver their statements, thereby highlighting where they see the main challenges and what the role of the OSCE should be in this regard.

SESSION I

Impact of Natural Disasters: Losses and Damages

Selected topics:

- Human and social losses from natural and cascading disasters.
- Economic losses, gap between economic and insured losses.
- Effects of Disaster Risk Management on economic damage: Costs of poorly managed disasters vs. savings by prevention and preparedness.

Natural Disasters can have devastating short and long-term impacts on the society and the economy of a country. The economic costs of natural disasters are on the rise: both worldwide and in the OSCE area. Disasters have negative impacts on several levels: they negatively affect communities and individual households and seriously setback the economy and the social development of nations. Natural disasters can also heavily impact the environment and put communities further at risk. Economic losses from natural disasters increased roughly 10-fold in recent decades.

Questions that could be addressed:

- What are the trends concerning the impact of natural disasters on human life and the fabric of society itself: human casualties, missing persons, displacement, social disruption, poverty increase, decline or drawback of development?
- What are the trends in the economic costs and losses from natural disasters (decline in productivity; damage to infrastructure; loss of fertile agricultural land; resource degradation and contamination; risks of high-level economic losses from disasters in big metropolitan centers, risks of major energy blackouts)?
- Gap between economic and insured losses. What financial risk sharing and risk transfer mechanisms exist to close this gap?
- What is the impact of disaster risk management on social and economic damage (costs of poorly managed disasters; savings by effective prevention and preparedness; role of early-warning systems; return-on-investment of DRR measures)?
- What are the financial benefits of investing in disaster mitigation/prevention/preparedness and what is the role of different stakeholders (politicians, international organizations, civil society, media) in that regard?

SESSION II

Behind Natural Disasters – The human-environment interaction. Case studies 1

Selected topics:

- Concrete examples of past disasters in the OSCE region
- Disasters as symptoms of human interaction with the physical environment
- Role of prevention, preparedness, response, recovery and rehabilitation

This session will focus on the causes of natural disasters and on the importance of prevention and preparedness. Population growth and density, settlement, migration to urban and coastal areas, environmental degradation caused by over-exploitation of natural resources or increased dependence on critical infrastructure and technology increase the human exposure and vulnerability to natural disasters. The number of natural disasters will likely continue to increase in the future as global warming is expected to generate more severe meteorological events.

Questions that could be addressed:

- When does a natural event become a disaster?
- What psychological, behavioral, social, political, economic, land-use and technological features, practices and trends make us exposed, and hence vulnerable, to natural hazards/events?
- How does our ecological footprint affect the frequency and magnitude of natural disasters? How does our ecological footprint affect security and stability in transboundary regions?
- What links exist between disaster exposure/vulnerability and poverty?
- How can prevention and preparedness mitigate the effects of natural disasters?

SESSION III PANEL DEBATE

Improving Environmental Security: How can we reduce natural disaster risks?

Selected topics:

- Lessons learned from the past
- Role of Good Governance
- Managing vulnerabilities. Sustainable management of natural resources

This panel debate will focus on concrete measures of how to better prevent, prepare for and respond to natural disasters.

Questions that could be addressed:

- How can response and recovery lay the groundwork for avoiding new/existing vulnerabilities to future disasters? How to integrate sustainable approaches and disaster-risk-sensitive measures into early recovery phases?
- What is the role of Good Governance in disaster risk reduction (tasks and responsibilities of governments on national, sub-national and on local level; role of co-ordination between different governmental levels)?
- Mitigating risks and reducing exposure and vulnerabilities (sustainable management of natural resources, demographics, migration and housing policy). How could the OSCE increase participatory environmental decision making and environmental awareness in this regard?
- Ways of encouraging governments to allocate more resources for livelihood protection, poverty alleviation, and wealth creation while reducing disaster risks. A role for the OSCE?
- What adaptation mechanisms exist which can be utilized to improve the resilience of nations and communities?

SESSION IV

Cooperation in the Integrated Management of Natural Disasters: Case studies 2.

Selected topics:

- Cases of national and transboundary disasters.
- Coordination between States and between military and civilian actors.
- Promoting partnerships at local, regional and international level.

Natural disasters know no boundaries, spreading across borders and political jurisdictions. This part of session IV will focus on cooperation with regard to national and transboundary disasters on an international, regional and national scale to manage disaster risks in an integrated manner. At the same time, transboundary cooperation in environmental issues, including DRR, can contribute to conflict prevention and confidence building.

Based on concrete cases of large-scale national level disasters as well as disasters with transboundary effects, the following questions could be addressed:

- What are the best ways and means of coordination between military and civilian actors (CMCoord) in disaster response?
- What are the best practices in coordination between national, sub-national and local response units as well as between governmental and civil society actors?
- How are stakeholder partnerships promoted at a local, regional and international level?
- How can authorities ensure coordination among affected countries for effective cross-border disaster response and recovery mechanisms?
- How can DRR act as an important confidence and security building measure: concrete examples and suggestions for the future?

SESSION IV cont.

Cooperation in the Integrated Management of Natural Disasters: Case studies 3.

Selected topics:

- Cases of small-scale and cascading (NaTech) disasters. Impact on non-nuclear critical infrastructure.
- Coordination between national and local response units.
- Coordination between governmental and civil society actors.

This part of session IV will focus on cooperation in the case of small-scale as well as cascading (NaTech) disasters to manage disaster risks in an integrated manner.

Tens of thousands of small-scale natural disasters occur each year throughout the world, affecting communities and the livelihoods of poor people in rural areas and municipalities, perpetuating or even deteriorating their levels of exposure, vulnerability and human security. Small-scale disasters, contrary to the extreme and large scale extraordinary events, are very often not visible at national or sub-national level.

It is well known that natural disasters can trigger secondary disasters such as the spill of hazardous chemical materials or the shut-down of electrical power lines leading to blackouts. These secondary technological accidents triggered by a natural disaster event are known as "NaTechs". NaTech events can occur anywhere where natural and technological hazards co-exist. The management of NaTechs is particularly challenging, since the response to the technological disaster complicates the mitigation and prevention, the preparedness, and the response. Critical infrastructure damage is a central feature of NaTechs. The threat posed by cascading disasters to nations, communities and the environment is a serious challenge.

Based on concrete cases of small-scale national disasters as well as cascading events, this second part of session IV could answer the following questions:

- How do small-scale disasters impact poor communities?
- How is community resilience against small-scale disasters best increased? Role of the OSCE in improving community resilience?
- What is the role of coordination between national and local response units and between governmental and civil-society actors in small-scale disasters?
- How are cascading events best managed? Particularly challenges linked to NaTechs. Interaction between natural and technological disasters; NaTech mapping, NaTech awareness and NaTech Risk Management.

SESSION V **PANEL DEBATE**

Role of civil society in disaster risk management.

Selected topics:

- Community-based disaster risk management
- Role of civil society, including business community, and social networks in crisis mapping
- Role of Aarhus Centers to increase awareness of multi-hazard risks in the OSCE region

Effective prevention, preparedness and response to disasters require awareness of and partnerships among local government and the local communities on the risks, causes and the coping mechanisms for natural disasters.

The civil society – NGOs, private sector and academia – is an important stakeholder in integrated disaster risk management. Re-insurance companies play a crucial role in managing the costs of disasters. Civil society organizations can contribute to increasing resilience of communities and nations at large by putting the concerns, needs and priorities of vulnerable people at the heart of DRR policies and practices. Furthermore, civil society organizations can be an integral part of the implementation of local DRR measures.

The potential for DRR understanding from a global, regional, national, sub-national to a local level is heightened by the distribution of information. Crowdsourcing can be an additional disaster risk management tool, particularly for early warning and current risk identification.

Questions that could be addressed:

- What is community-based disaster risk management? What are the ways and means to empower communities to become more resilient to natural hazards?
- What are the responsibilities of national, sub-national and local governments and what are the responsibilities of each individual within disaster risk management?
- What is the role of civil society, including the business community and social networks, in disaster risk management?
- Is there a role for Aarhus Centers in increasing awareness on multi-hazard risks among the population in the OSCE region?
- What is the role women could play as first-line managers of community-based disaster risk management?

CONCLUDING SESSION
PANEL DEBATE

The OSCE's Role in Follow-up to the Forum / Outlook / Closing Statements

Selected topics:

- Wrap-up of the discussions. Lessons learned and identifying priority areas for future discussion and increased co-operation.
- Outlook to the Second Preparatory Meeting in Switzerland.

This final panel debate should wrap-up the discussions and identify the role the OSCE could play with regard to the integrated disaster risk management.

The Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities and the Chairman of the Permanent Council will make their closing statements, give a short preview of the agenda of the 2nd Preparatory Meeting that will take place from 20-21 May 2014 in Switzerland/Montreux and formally close the meeting.

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Annex 1 BACKGROUND ON THE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

The Economic and Environmental Forum (EEF) is the main annual meeting within the economic and environmental dimension of the OSCE.

It was established by the 1992 OSCE/CSCE Ministerial Council Meeting in Prague, and further defined by the 1992 Helsinki Document, Chapter VII, paragraphs 21 to 32.

The EEF objective is to give political stimulus to the dialogue on economic and environmental issues linked to security and to contribute to the elaboration of specific recommendations and follow-up activities to address these challenges. It also reviews the implementation of the participating States' commitments in the economic and environmental dimension.

Based on Permanent Council Decision 958 of 11 November 2010, the Forum comprises two preparatory meetings and a concluding event.

The annual Forum process brings together representatives from governments of the OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation, OSCE institutions, OSCE field operations, international organizations.

Moreover, subject to provisions contained in Chapter IV, paragraphs 15 and 16, of the 1992 Helsinki Document, civil society representatives - including the private sector, non-governmental organizations and academia – with relevant experience in the area under discussion are also invited to participate at the Forum

The EEF focuses every year on a theme proposed by the Chairmanship and agreed upon by the 57 participating States.

On 25 of July 2013, the PC decided to dedicate the 22nd Economic and Environmental Forum to the theme "Responding to environmental challenges with a view to promoting cooperation and security in the OSCE area" (*Decision No. 1088 of 25 July 2013*).

Further readings:

- Consolidated summaries of Economic and Environmental Forum preparatory meetings are available at <http://www.osce.org/eea/66005> and of previous Economic and Environmental Fora at <http://www.osce.org/eea/66004>.
- The OSCE EED factsheet can be accessed at <http://www.osce.org/eea/30348>.
- The OSCE Strategy Document for the EED (2003 Maastricht Document) can be found at <http://www.osce.org/eea/20705>.

Mitigation and prevention is a long term commitment that means *inter alia* strengthening institutions, human resources, and infrastructure in order to anticipate the potential risks. Disaster losses can be mitigated – and in some instances even prevented – through integrated disaster risk management.

Preparedness is key to ensuring an effective response to disasters and entails forecasting, early warning and alert systems as well as emergency management procedures (e.g. temporary evacuation of people and property from threatened locations).

The response delivered in the wake of a disaster concerns the short term management of the after effects (basic needs such as food, shelter, and water sanitation). Coordination of response units (e.g. between civilian and military actors, between different government levels, between international and national emergency relief organizations) is of crucial importance for a rapid and effective response to natural disasters. In the longer term, response to disasters also encompasses the recovery and rehabilitation phases which can provide the opportunity to launch sustainable changes.

Recovery and rehabilitation entails the reconstruction or replacement of severely damaged physical structures incl. the natural environment, the restoration of the (local) economy and the restoration of institutional and social structures. It makes sense to introduce disaster-risk-reduction measures during the recovery phase so as to limit possible losses in the future. These measures take into account the lessons learned from past events. Both recovery and reconstruction efforts should avoid creating new risks and take into account lessons learned from past disasters. Special protection from future damage should be given e.g. when reconstructing critical infrastructures. Recovery and reconstruction measures are thus again preventative measures, completing the circle of integrated risk management.

The concept of resilience addresses the ability of a system (individual, household, community, state) to resist, absorb, accommodate to, and recover from the effects of shocks and stresses in a timely and efficient manner while undergoing necessary changes. DRR in the frame of resilience building explicitly tackles the root causes of disasters and disaster losses. These include the management of natural resources, land use and land management considerations, maintaining and protection of critical infrastructures or financial assets. The reduction of environmental, social and economic vulnerabilities contributes to the overall resilience of societies. The concept of ‘resilience’ has achieved significant attention on international agendas over the last few years because of a growing recognition that different types of risks and their negative impacts (e.g. climate change, natural disasters; health, violence and conflict) are inter-connected.

Fundamental to the whole integrated risk management cycle are comprehensive risk assessments and evaluations.