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**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF SWITZERLAND AT THE
2010 OSCE REVIEW CONFERENCE**

Vienna, 25 October 2010

**Economic and environmental dimension (EED)
Sessions 5 and 6: Environmental cluster**

Environmental security

Mr. Chairperson,

With the adoption of a comprehensive Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension at the Maastricht Ministerial Council meeting in 2003, the protection of the environment was recognized as a “high priority for all our States”. It was also noted that environmental co-operation can make an important contribution to human security. It is therefore important that in the development of security policies, too, maximum attention should be paid to environmental considerations.

Environmental risks are relevant to security in many ways, particularly in the context of conflicts. Firstly, environmental risks can exacerbate conflicts over natural resources such as water; in such cases, cross-border resource management can help in conflict prevention. Secondly, transnational co-operation in connection with environmental assets – like all co-operation – can create trust and contribute to the reduction of tensions between States that have been confronting one another or still confront one another in a conflict. Thirdly, armed conflicts often leave in their wake environmental damage that needs to be repaired. In this light, environmental aspects need to be duly taken into account in the whole conflict cycle, especially at the early warning stage.

In the area of environmental security, we do not believe that the OSCE can use its comparative advantages in isolation. The recipe for its success lies rather in co-operation, based on the principle of the division of labour, with functionally related or geographically relevant partner organizations, as well as in the activities of well-established field presences in young States in the East that are in a process of transition. As an organization with a relatively “light” structure, the OSCE is dependent on competent partners in the complex, often costly, work of dealing with environmental problems. For example, the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities is supporting the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in the implementation of its Aarhus Convention, which encourages the political participation of civil society in considering environmental matters

and its access to information and the courts. On the other hand, too little use is made of the specific potential of the OSCE field operations. Economic and environmental officers could further intensify their advisory activities in States particularly affected by environmental risks. The OSCE, as a unique platform for discussion and negotiation, could make a greater contribution to the peaceful resolution of conflicts of interest in environmental matters; this, however, presupposes political will on the part of the States concerned.

Mr. Chairperson,

The most comprehensive and convincing example of OSCE's inter-institutional co-operation on environmental questions is, in our view, the Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative. This has brought together, alongside the OSCE and the UNECE, which cover the same geographical area, above all the worldwide United Nations Environment Programme and United Nations Development Programme. This combination of regional and substantive expertise constitutes, not least, a guarantee of quality and sustainability in common projects. Particularly valuable are the analyses of security and environmental risks in countries in the four ENVSEC regions where the OSCE is present: the Western Balkans, the Southern Caucasus, Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

When Switzerland helps finance individual projects from the ENVSEC work programme, it gives preference to decentralized contacts in the recipient countries and regions. Swiss environmental diplomacy has full confidence in the ENVSEC Initiative, which has been functioning successfully since 2003, and is resolved to continue to support it in the longer term. Concrete evidence of this is the fact that, in the year 2009, Switzerland felt able to make a substantial contribution to the construction of premises for the ENVSEC Secretariat. We are confident that the new headquarters in Geneva will allow the OSCE and the other ENVSEC partners to co-operate even more closely and efficiently on environmental security in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, for your attention.