

NATO Security Science Forum on Environmental Security

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The Contribution of the OSCE in Addressing Issues of Environmental Security

by
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**Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great honour for me to address today the NATO Security Science Forum on Environmental Security.

As Mrs. Marta Bonifert has already introduced the Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative, I will concentrate my own remarks on the specific contribution of the OSCE, based on its comprehensive security mandate, in addressing issues of environmental security. More specifically I would like to do three things:

- First I would like to refer to the key documents spelling out how the OSCE sees its role in matters of environment and security;
- Second I would like to refer to the involvement of the OSCE in the ENVSEC Initiative and some of the OSCE activities and projects that have been implemented and funded under the ENVSEC Initiative; and
- Third I would like to brief you on last years OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum devoted to issues of environmental security and on the follow-up activities that have been supported by the OSCE.

1. Key Documents supporting the OSCE involvement in issues of environment and security

In the **Helsinki Final Act of 1975**, the States participating in the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the OSCE's forerunner, expressed the conviction that "efforts to develop co-operation in the fields of trade, industry, science and technology, the environment and other areas of economic activity contribute to the reinforcement of peace and security in Europe, and in the world as a whole." These economic and environmental issues made up the so-called Basket II of the Helsinki Act and have since become known as the OSCE's second of three dimensions (the first relates to politico-military matters and the third is called the human dimension).

At the Ministerial Council meeting in Maastricht in December 2003, participating States adopted the **OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension**. In doing so, they committed themselves to co-operate on economic, good governance, sustainable development and environmental protection issues in order to tackle the threats and challenges to

security that had emerged over the previous decade. In the Strategy Document, the participating States recognized that “environmental degradation, unsustainable uses of natural resources and mismanagement in the processing and disposal of wastes have a substantial impact on the health, welfare, stability and security of our countries”. Bearing in mind these concerns, the OSCE, with relevant partners, is committed to transform such risks into avenues for co-operation.

Last year, under Spanish Chairmanship, the OSCE participating States devoted special attention to issues of environmental security under the OSCE second dimension. This led to the adoption by the OSCE Ministerial Council on 30 November 2007 of the **Madrid Declaration on Environment and Security**. This declaration reiterates “the determination of all participating States to further strengthen co-operation aiming at reducing environment-related security risks, among each other and with other international and regional institutions and organisations working in the area of environment”. Among those environment-related security risks, the Decision singles out those related to land degradation, soil contamination, desertification and water management. The Decision is also the first OSCE Document to officially address the issue of climate change, recognising that it is a long-term challenges and acknowledging that, while the United Nations climate process is the appropriate forum for negotiating future global action on climate change, the OSCE, as a regional security organisation under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, has a complementary role to play within its mandate in addressing this challenge in its specific region.

The Decision concludes among others that “environmental degradation, including both natural and man-made disasters, and their possible impact on migratory pressures, could be a potential additional contributor to conflict” and that “climate change may magnify these environmental challenges”.

To move beyond this rather general Declaration, the Spanish Chairmanship also put on the table an **Action Plan on the Threats and Opportunities in the Area of Environment and Security**, which includes a number of more specific recommendations in five areas:

- Refocusing OSCE institutions and mechanisms on environmental matters;
- Raising awareness on environmental challenges, including climate change and its security implications;
- Promoting environmental co-operation as a tool for conflict prevention and confidence building;
- Improving environmental governance; and
- Addressing social economic aspects of environmental security.

This Action Plan was not endorsed as such but simply noted in the Madrid Declaration, which encouraged participating States to further elaborate common responses to environmental challenges, fully taking into account the OSCE mandate and capabilities and focussing on the OSCE’s added value and avoiding duplication.

2. The OSCE activities in the framework of the ENVSEC Initiative

As Mrs. Bonifert explained, the ENVSEC Initiative builds on the combined strength of each organisation’s expertise, experience and field presences. One of the strengths of the initiative is that the different partners respond to different constituencies. While UNEP mainly deal with Ministries of Environment, UNDP with Ministries of Development and NATO with Ministries of Defence, **the OSCE deals with Ministries of Foreign Affairs**. This is one of the stronger element of added value that the OSCE, as a political security organization, brings to the picture. **OSCE helps to bring environmental issues onto the political agenda and then generate political will to address the issues at the highest level**. This is achieved through the contacts of the OSCE Secretariat has in Vienna with the delegations of the 56 OSCE participating States as well as through its broader national contacts with the government and the civil society of the participating States, in particular the 17 States where the OSCE maintains field offices. The OSCE Field Offices, sometimes joining forces with UNDP Field Offices, play an important role

both in monitoring environmental security issues and in providing assistance to the implementation of ENVSEC projects in the countries where they are located.

Let me give you a few examples of OSCE's activities under the umbrella of the ENVSEC Initiative:

- A first example is the **OSCE-led Environmental Assessment Mission to fire-affected territories in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region in the Southern Caucasus**. During this Mission, local and international wild land fire experts assessed the short-and long-term impacts of the fires on the environment and recommended measures to counteract their detrimental impacts. The Mission recommended a series of joint capacity-building and training activities in fire management, fire prevention and preparedness and fire suppression. It also urged enhanced regional co-operation on both fire and water management issues in the context of relevant regional and international frameworks. In the light of the ongoing conflict, the Mission served as an important confidence-building measure by bringing the parties together on a critical environmental issue.
- Another interesting example in the South Caucasus is the building of **environmental co-operation between Georgian and Ossetian populations in the South Ossetian zone of conflict**. Together with UNEP experts, the OSCE Field Mission in Tskhinvali is implementing environmental assessments and public awareness campaigns with the objective of avoiding conflict and building co-operation on environmental issues in the zone of conflict.
- A joint OSCE/NATO project under the ENVSEC umbrella deserves special reference here. It is the **South Caucasus River Monitoring Programme**, which brings together representatives of the National Academies of Science of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to conduct co-operative monitoring of the Kura-Aras/Araks River Basin. The monitoring activities, carried out regularly at over 40 locations along the Kura-Aras/Araks, are measuring the occurrence of persistent organic pesticides, heavy metals and radioactivity in the river basin system. In March 2006, the OSCE field missions assisted a NATO assessment of the results and potential new areas of co-operation between the three countries.
- Under the framework of the ENVSEC Initiative and with the instrumental role of the OSCE field presence in Kazakhstan, the collaboration between the OSCE, the UNECE and the UNESCAP implemented jointly the **water management project for the rivers Chu and Talas rivers** flowing from Kyrgyzstan into Kazakhstan, leading to the creation of a Bilateral Commission between the two governments concerned. An important component of this work was the public participation elements built into the process. It is worth noting that there were no comparable co-operative projects in Central Asia at the start-up of the project and this co-operation can therefore be seen as a nascent initiative in that direction. Through establishing the creation of the Bilateral Commission, a long-term, mutually beneficial and co-operative exchange of resources between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan is now in place, promoting enhanced regional governance.
- The OSCE and the UNECE also implemented jointly the project "**Transboundary Cooperation and Sustainable Management of the Dniester River (Dniester I)**". Both organisations have now been requested, by the Ukrainian and Moldovan authorities, to facilitate the development of a follow-up project. The project "**Action programme for Improved Joint Management of the Dniester River Basin**" (Dniester II) aims at addressing bottlenecks in the transboundary water co-operation, in particular, a narrow scope of co-operation, lack of public participation and limited access to and exchange of information. The key output of the Dniester II project will be an agreed Action Programme, elaborating on the development of the legal and institutional framework, co-operation on emergency and sanitary-hygienic issues and development of an open joint information system. A list of draft documents being developed in the framework of the project include a Dniester Agreement, a Regulation on public participation in the

decision-making relevant to the Dniester river basin, a Regulation on co-operation in the area of the sanitary-hygienic control, a Regulation on management of the Dniester website and an Action Plan to develop an information management system for the Dniester river. The documents are being discussed by representatives of state authorities, experts and research institutes in Moldova and Ukraine.

3. The 15th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum on “Environmental Security and Sustainable Development” and its follow-up activities

Every year, the Economic and Environmental Forum (EEF) is the most important event organized by the OSCE under its economic and environmental dimension. It is attended by high level officials from its 56 participating States.

The 15th OSCE EEF was dedicated, under the 2007 Chairmanship of Spain, to “Key challenges to ensure environmental security and sustainable development in the OSCE area: land degradation, soil contamination and water management”. Because of the topic chosen, this EEF could indeed become a turning point for the OSCE Economic and Environmental Dimension.

The Forum was split into two sessions. The first session took place in Vienna on 22-23 January 2007, while the second session took place in Prague on 21-23 May. Each session was prepared by a conference at expert level. While the first Preparatory Conference, held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on 16-17 November 2006, concentrated on “Land Degradation and Soil Contamination”, the second one in Zaragoza, Spain, on 12-13 March 2007 focused on Water Management.

The second session of the EEF in Prague was a clear success, both in terms of the number of participants, which exceeded 300, and in terms of the active engagement of the participants in the discussion on the theme of the Forum.

The key message conveyed in the opening session of the meeting by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos, was the following: global security will be increasingly at risk because of man-made environmental threats but, with the right political will, the promotion of good governance and deepening regional co-operation, the threats can be reduced. “It is important”, he said “to include environmental security issues in political agendas by fostering the participation of national, international, public and private actors... Environmental co-operation can be an effective catalyst for reducing tensions, broadening co-operation and promoting peace”.

More generally, this 15th Forum highlighted how severe and how threatening for security environmental problems could be in the OSCE area, namely problems of land degradation and desertification, problems of soil contamination, problems of water scarcity, problems related to climate change, but also how much co-operation at all levels was needed to address them: co-operation of all stakeholders at the national level, co-operation at the regional and sub-regional level, in particular on issues of water management, and of course co-operation at the global level.

Further to the 15th Forum, the OSCE embarked into several initiatives providing support to co-operation at the regional level:

- The OSCE is providing support to the establishment of a **Regional Drought Management Center in Central Asia**. This Center would be established by the countries of Central Asia as part of their efforts to implement the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and with the support of the UNCCD Secretariat. This Center

would not only monitor the desertification process but propose common strategies to combat desertification including training activities on techniques of soil conservation and watershed rehabilitation. A co-ordination meeting of the Central Asian national hydro-meteorological institutes took place in Tashkent last November and a further meeting is planned to take place in Bishkek in June of this year.

- My Office organised in **Tashkent on 30-31 October 2007**, in co-operation with the OSCE Spanish Chairmanship, a **follow-up conference to the Forum concentrating on the issues of degradation of land and pollution of soil as well as on water management in Central Asia**. This conference made us aware of the severity of the challenges faced by that region, namely growing population, lower land fertility and yields, desertification, salination, further drying up of the Aral Sea, decrease in biodiversity and deterioration of eco-systems compounded by the adverse effects of climate change, deterioration of irrigation infrastructure and worrying social and health indicators. All these developments have serious implications for security and stability in the region. Representatives of the countries of the region presented the many initiatives, programmes and projects that are underway to address these challenges. The originality of the conference was that, at the suggestion of the Spanish Chairmanship, it brought in the factor of technology transfer. Representatives of public and private companies or entities from Austria, France, Germany, Spain, Turkey, the United-Kingdom as well as from Israel presented new technologies in areas such as irrigation, desalination, water sharing and information systems and more generally water and land use efficiency. Representatives from international institutions presented the experience they had gained through their financing over the last decade.
- A third initiative was the organisation under the joint auspices of the Spanish OSCE Chairmanship and of the NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme of a **workshop in Valencia, Spain, on 10-11 December 2007, on “Water Scarcity, Land Degradation and Desertification in the Mediterranean Region: Environment and Security Aspects”**. Possible future scenarii for environmental conditions in the Mediterranean region were presented by the Director of the Blue Plan, which is the Regional Activity Center of the UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan, based in Sophia Antipolis, France. He alerted us that trends projected for water and energy demand for the next 20 years in the 21 Mediterranean-rim countries, which are also contracting parties to the Barcelona Convention, are simply not compatible with the objectives of sustainable development and that, compounded with the effects of climate change, they risk being associated with irreversible land and other environmental degradations, loss of livelihoods, increased migration, and ultimately serious threats to security and stability in the region. It is crucially important to improve the management of water scarcity, to save energy, to increase the share of renewable energy and to decouple economic growth from over exploitation of natural resources and excessive pressure on the environment. The working groups set up during this workshop, with the participation of experts from the Mediterranean countries, provided very interesting opportunities to exchange diagnosis, experiences and concrete proposals for further initiatives in these areas.

In the years to come, more attention will certainly be given to environmental security issues and more generally to the links between the economy, the environment and security. The adoption by the OSCE Ministerial Council of the Madrid Declaration on Environment and Security is to be seen as an important commitment and certainly a step in the right direction, but we should not fool ourselves: unless we continue to take earnest and fast action to ensure that the development of our planet is undertaken in a more sustainable manner, history will judge us harshly for having jeopardized the future of coming generations.

I thank you for your attention.