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Agenda item 7 (panellist)

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**RIO+20 REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING**  
**ITEM 7- The Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by thanking the UNECE for organizing this meeting and giving the OSCE the opportunity to speak in this session.

Among the questions to be addressed under this item, I would like to particularly elaborate on two issues: the importance of regional co-operation and the engagement of major groups.

Over the last two decades, the European landscape has experienced historic changes that have altered our perception of security. Security is now seen in a much broader context. In the OSCE context, it ranges from "hard" security issues, to fostering economic development, ensuring environmental cooperation, and promoting the full respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

My Office has a mandate to identify, monitor and counter threats and challenges to security and stability caused by economic and environmental factors. Our mandate is based on the Maastricht Strategy Document that was endorsed by the OSCE Ministerial Council in 2003.

The Maastricht Strategy underlined how important sustainable development is for peace and stability and called on the participating States to support the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The last 20 years demonstrated the significance of the regional perspective in dealing with global issues. Transboundary water management, land degradation, hazardous waste management, climate change adaptation, and conservation of natural resources, all require co-operation and partnership among neighbouring countries. Not surprisingly, these issues also have significant security implications. In some cases, these challenges can be the driving forces to provoking tensions. But at the same time, the very characteristics of environmental issues make them excellent candidates for cooperation and confidence building because environmental problems can only be solved through joint efforts.

It is based on this understanding that the OSCE, as the world's largest regional security organization, attaches great importance to environment and sustainable development issues. In all our work, we cherish our collaboration with intergovernmental organizations in the region. First and foremost within the Environment and Security – ENVSEC- Initiative which I have the honour to chair this year. ENVSEC was born in Kiev at the fifth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. It is now a common endeavour of six organizations. The OSCE joins forces with UNEP, UNDP, UNECE, REC and NATO as an associate partner to address environmental challenges with security implications.

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ENVSEC addresses the critical links and impacts of environmental management, human security, conflict prevention and sustainable development in all four regions: Central Asia, South Caucasus, Eastern Europe and Southeastern Europe. It is an example of an innovative partnership which has produced concrete results and lessons learned that are worth sharing with other stakeholders across the world. Born in the UNECE region, the ENVSEC Initiative can serve as a model for other regions with its institutional partnership structure and its substantive focus on security.

As ENVSEC partners, we will spare no efforts to strengthen further the Initiative's niche in transforming risks into co-operation and we are ready to share our experiences during the Rio+20 deliberations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Another good example from this region that in my opinion, deserves global attention is the Aarhus Convention. It represents a major step forward in advancing sustainable development through strengthening democracy and environmental protection. The Convention is unique in the extent to which it promotes citizens' environmental rights. Its core principles-the right to information, the right to participation and the right to access to justice-empower ordinary members of the public to play a greater role in promoting sustainable forms of development.

In many countries, I would add, the success of this Convention has become evident by the increasing numbers of the Aarhus Centres and their performance in reaching out to the civil society. The OSCE, together with ENVSEC, has been supporting the establishment and functioning of Aarhus Centres in several countries since 2002. Scattered at first as individual projects, now, there is a sizeable network of 32 Aarhus Centres in 10 countries in the OSCE region. These Centres provide a valuable platform to effectively engage major groups in decision-making at local and national levels and contribute to the practical implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration. Central and local government agencies, civil society organizations, women and youth groups, academia, media and the private sector are the primary partners of Aarhus Centres. In summary, the Aarhus Centres demonstrate that change is indeed possible when all sides work together.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I do hope that the linkages between environment, sustainable development and security will get the recognition they deserve during the deliberations leading up to the Rio+20 Conference, and that the partnership among several international organizations offered by the Environment and Security Initiative for this region can set a partnership model for other regions of the world.

Having said that, I would like to invite you all to the ENVSEC Side Event which will take place today at 13:00 in Room 27 which will give us the opportunity to share with you experiences on how ENVSEC facilitates a co-ordinated action for sustainable development.

Thank you.

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