

**Presentation for the Sixth Ministerial "Environment for Europe" Conference
Belgrade, 10-12 October 2007**

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Excellencies, distinguished delegates, experts, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address you at this session of the Sixth Ministerial "Environment for Europe" Conference devoted to partnerships, at a time when it is becoming increasingly clear that solutions to environmental problems require co-operation and coordination among neighbouring states and international partners.

Environmental concerns have been on the OSCE's agenda since its inception and comprise an important part of its comprehensive concept of security. With the understanding, that environmental degradation, the unsustainable use of, and the unequal access to natural resources have security implications, the OSCE is committed to raising environmental security issues to a higher level in national and international political agendas. In recent years, the OSCE has fostered the development of river basin commissions for the Chu-Talas, Sava, and Dniester rivers, facilitated the destruction of highly dangerous rocket fuel components and established Aarhus public environmental information centres in efforts to broaden public awareness, participation in decision-making and access to the judiciary in environmental affairs.

The 2007 OSCE Spanish Chairmanship has renewed this commitment by proposing as theme for the 15th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum the subject of "Key Challenges to Ensure Environmental Security and Sustainable Development in the OSCE Area: Land Degradation, Soil Contamination and Water Management." OSCE Forum meetings have brought together representatives of OSCE participating States, environmental experts and relevant international organizations to develop coordinated responses to identified environmental threats to economic and social stability' in the OSCE region. Currently, the OSCE Spanish Chairmanship is sponsoring several follow-up events including a workshop in Tashkent on integrated land and water management in Central Asia, with emphasis on the role of technology transfers and the organization, together with the- UNCCD Secretariat, of a meeting aimed at establishing a regional drought monitoring centre also in Central Asia.

The OSCE Spanish Chairmanship has also initiated the development of a Strategy on Environment and Security for the adoption by all 56 participating States at the upcoming OSCE Madrid Ministerial. The proposed Strategy sets out a detailed list of activities designed to make better use of OSCE institutional capacities for political dialogue, early warning, monitoring, confidence building, awareness raising and capacity building in the area of environment and security.

One of the most important environment activities of the OSCE is its participation in the Environment and Security Initiative. Recognizing that environmental problems do not stop at national borders, the ENVSEC Initiative has developed a platform that turns the potential for conflict between states into opportunities for confidence-building and co-operation. In close coordination with national governments, ENVSEC has conducted environment and security assessments in the regions of Central Asia, South-Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus,

¹ The present document is a scanned copy of a statement received on 11 October 2007 during the Sixth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" (Belgrade, 10-12 October 2007). The document has not been formally processed by the UNECE.

and Eastern Europe. Following these in-depth assessments , ENVSEC has developed work programmes, consisting of over 70 projects ranging from capacity-building to environmental policy development and public awareness events, to address priority issues.

But of course, the OSCE is but just one member of a dedicated partnership of international agencies devoted to linking environment and security considerations. Joining the OSCE in the ENVSEC Initiative are the United Nations Development and Environmental Programmes, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe, and our associated member, NATO. The combined strength of these partner organizations helps focus interventions in a way that meets the environmental security priorities of national governments in a coordinated manner. This type of international coordination is exactly what was meant in the 2005 Paris Declaration which called for more harmonization from international organizations in providing development aid and humanitarian assistance.

As the international community moves to grapple with emerging threats of climate change, coordinated action among states is clearly needed to prevent the worse effects of potential crises to materialize. The OSCE will do its part to promote cooperation between its participating States on emerging threats to environmental security.