Sixth Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention
Budva, Montenegro

OSCE Statement
by Ms. Oliver Zurovac-Kuzman, OSCE Mission to Serbia

Madam Chair, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for providing the Organization for Security and Cooperation, Mission to Serbia with an opportunity to share with you activities aimed at enhancing the enforcement of environmental legislation, strengthening the environmental legislative framework and promoting diverse stakeholders to engage more closely in implementing environmental laws.

The OSCE considers activities aimed at enforcing environmental legislation as highly relevant, as environmental security can be achieved only through continued and systemic enforcement of environmental legislation.

Over the past few years, in partnership with the Ministry of Interior, the Mission organized specialized trainings for representatives of the police service on how to more effectively process crimes that threaten environmental security. These trainings took place in five cities and gathered 130 inspectors from 15 police districts across Serbia. The curriculum included interactive presentations by experienced criminal investigators from Austria and Belgium and national experts regarding best practices in prosecuting environmental crimes through the enforcement of EU legislation and international environmental treaties. The goal of the trainings was to increase the knowledge and skills of representatives of the MoI to upgrade existing practices of enforcing environmental law and prevent acts that contribute to degrading the environment.

For the third consecutive year, the OSCE Mission to Serbia is supporting the Environmental Law Clinic, established at the Faculty of Law, at the University of Belgrade. The Workshops organized within the Environmental Law Clinic enhance the knowledge and skills of law students regarding environmental protection, providing them with an opportunity to develop practical skills in handling environmental cases according to different legal instruments and contribute to promoting the enforcement of the environmental legal framework. Furthermore, it
enabled law students to meet and work with experts in the field of law and environmental protection as well as to explore good practices regarding environmental law at international and national levels. Almost one hundred students with high average grades, in their senior year, participated in the Environmental Law Clinic. This academic year, the interest for the program continues to be high and another 50 students will be enrolled in the program.

Together with the Judicial Academy the Mission supported the organization and delivery of seminars for Administrative Court judges, civil and criminal law judges, judicial advisors and deputy public prosecutors. In total, 135 members of the judiciary participated in the capacity building events.

Through presentations and case examples delivered by national and international environmental legislation experts, Administrative Court judges were provided the possibility to advance their knowledge of provisions granted by the Aarhus Convention and the related Compliance mechanism as well as of the new administrative procedures that occur from breaches of environmental law in the national and EU contexts. These trainings were aided by the “Handbook on The Right of Access to Justice in Matters related to Environmental Protection in Administrative Procedures and Administrative Disputes”, developed with Mission assistance, which provides guidance in processing environmental administrative cases.

The capacity building seminar for criminal and civil law judges and deputy public prosecutors was focused on increasing the enforcement of provisions of Criminal and Civil Procedure Codes through presentations of relevant environmental cases from Serbia and cases of complaints filed before the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights. Particular attention was given to the relevance of provisions granted by the Aarhus Convention. An OSCE-supported “Manual on Legal Instruments for the Protection of the Environment through Civil and Criminal Law”, was distributed to the participants, aimed at assisting judges in processing environmental cases.

Thank you for your attention.