



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

23RD OSCE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

“Water governance in the OSCE area – increasing security and stability through co-operation”

FIRST PREPARATORY MEETING

Vienna, 26-27 January 2015

Closing Remarks

Dr. Halil Yurdakul Yigitguden

Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities

Dear Ambassadors,

Dear Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we conclude the First Preparatory Meeting of the 23rd OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum on “Water governance in the OSCE area – increasing security and stability through co-operation”, I would like to express my gratitude for the constructive discussions, the insightful and thought-provoking presentations, the competent moderation as well as a range of ideas generated over the last two days.

The theme of this year’s Forum is highly relevant for all 57 participating States of the Organization and Partners for Co-operation as water is increasingly becoming an essential element of national and regional security, especially at a time when water resources in the OSCE area are facing increased risks from climate change. Discussions over the last two days suggest that addressing the water challenges across the OSCE area requires a comprehensive governance approach to protect, use and share water in a responsible and equitable way. Implementing good water

governance has an important role to play in strengthening security and stability in the OSCE area and beyond.

We in the OSCE will strive to build on the recommendations generated at this First Preparatory Meeting, also by bringing our extensive experience and by further advancing partnerships with relevant national agencies, UN organizations, the private sector and non-governmental organizations in the area of water governance. ENVSEC will continue to provide us with a framework for translating such recommendations into practice, including the implementation of the Basel Ministerial Council Decision on Enhancing Disaster Risk Reduction.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me briefly highlight the main discussions over the last two days. The opening session, including three outstanding keynote speeches by State Secretary Bozovic, Professor Allan and Dr. Ait Kadi, has underlined the important role of well governed water in helping create opportunities for strengthening security and protecting the environment.

We have learned about the conceptual elements of water governance, including governance models. It was emphasized that water governance is about politics, the quality of institutions and interaction between organizations. The results of the on-going work in the framework of the OECD Water Governance Initiative, were presented along with a number of valuable insights from a foreign policy perspective, including the need for more extensive interaction between water and foreign policy agendas. We also had an opportunity to hear of several examples of implementing good water governance at regional level.

An extensive and in-depth discussion was dedicated to the issues related to water governance across sectors along with food and energy security and water efficiency. These deliberations showcased National Policy Dialogues and water-energy-food nexus assessments undertaken by UNECE in the framework of the Water Convention as effective tools to help assess and address water-related issues across different sectors.

Water efficiency was also one of the issues that several interventions placed a focus on. In particular, technological innovations for re-use of waste

water and Australia's experience in ensuring allocative water efficiency provided interesting examples that are worth further consideration in the OSCE area.

Furthermore, over the last two days we have looked at the two important dimensions of water governance: different levels of governance, and the role of transparency in promoting good water governance. In particular, it was emphasized that promoting integrity for good water governance goes beyond anti-corruption measures, and also includes building trust. Transparency can only be achieved in the context of public participation and access to information. The outreach capacity through the OSCE-supported network of Aarhus Centers was highlighted as an effective tool in this regard.

Dynamic discussions in all of the sessions led to a number of suggestions and recommendations about the possible areas where the OSCE as the regional security organization could provide its support in the field of water governance. These recommendations will be thoroughly considered with a view to identifying possible follow-up activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There are still a range of important aspects of water governance that merit discussion. The Second Preparatory Meeting, which will take place in Belgrade in May, will provide a forum for such an exchange.

I also hope that our discussions in the Forum process will contribute to the global processes, including the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, discussions on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Change Conference. And we are also thankful to the Co-Chair of the International Steering Committee of the 7th World Water Forum for today's comprehensive presentation on the preparations.

Thanks to the rapporteurs, a Consolidated Summary including the main key suggestions and recommendations made by the participants during the deliberations will be compiled by my Office and shared with all of you in the coming weeks.

I would like to thank the Serbian Chairmanship, the moderators, speakers and rapporteurs, the interpreters, the conference service staff, as well as the colleagues from my Office for their joint contribution to the success of this event.

I also want to thank all of you, dear participants, for your active contribution, and wish you a safe trip back home.