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**DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA**  
**ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

**22 nd OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum “Responding to  
Environmental Challenges with a View to Promoting Cooperation and Security  
in the OSCE Area”**

**FIRST PREPARATORY MEETING**  
**Vienna, 27 - 28 January 2014**

**Opening Statement**  
**Armenia**

Ms. Chairperson,

First we would like to thank the Swiss Chairmanship for setting the agenda of Economic and Environmental Forum by identifying a pertinent yet not very elaborated theme of response to natural disasters in the OSCE area.

Our thanks go also to our keynote speakers for their insightful presentations.

Armenia has been developing legislation, institutional capacities and interagency coordination to ready itself to the challenges posed by natural disasters.

The international partnership plays important role in securing better disaster risk evaluation, preparedness, management, mitigation and rehabilitation. It involves states, local communities and specialized international organizations. Armenia highly appreciates its cooperation with the UNDP, CSTO, NATO, and many countries majority of which are OSCE participating states.

The OSCE as a security linked organization may bring added value to the international cooperation in this field. To indentify its potential niche in addressing natural disasters it is important to take into account already existing OSCE experience and comparative advantages.

But first the scope of the OSCE activities should be related with the existing commitments and expertise in the economic and environmental field without duplicating the work of other international organizations and specialized agencies.

The OSCE involvement in the ENVSEC initiative already provides important points of references particularly at the realm of disaster risks evaluation and consequence management and mitigation in the framework of regional and trans-boundary cooperation. The OSCE field missions, with already developed links with various stakeholders, can and to a certain degree have already been involved in forging

coordination among various actors including civil society through supporting such initiatives as CASE and Aarhus center networks.

The natural disasters do not recognize borders, sovereignty or any other territorial status. The OSCE which is mandated to address conflicts and implement confidence building measures in all three dimensions can provide to the international partnerships access to conflict areas and involve all stakeholders in the natural disaster evaluation and consequence management and mitigation. It should be recalled that there was an environmental fact finding mission to Nagorno-Karabakh in 2006 which produced an important assessment and recommendations with regard to addressing natural disaster such as wild fire. In our view, those recommendations are still very relevant and within our joint work of addressing natural disasters we can contribute towards their implementation.

In welcoming all participants to this event, we are looking forward to hear from participating states, scientific community and civil society their opinions on further expanding the role of the OSCE in responding to natural disasters.

Thank you.