

Security Implications of Climate Change in South-Eastern Europe
Contributions to the region's climate resilience by the OSCE as well as Czechia

Side event organised on the occasion of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the 30th anniversary of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum held since its initiation in 1992 in Prague

30th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum
Thursday, 8 September 2022, 13:30 – 14:30 (tbc)

Concluding Remarks
Amb. Florian Raunig, Chair of EEC/Austria

I would like to warmly thank the Czech Foreign Ministry, Deputy Minister for Environment Dusík and my colleague Amb. Tomašová, with whom I had the pleasure to serve together in South Eastern Europe, for organising this timely and most important side event.

Our today's side event is just another event that demonstrates and underlines the urgent action, which is needed to mitigate the dangers stemming from climate crisis having arrived in midst our society and our daily lives. It also shows, that the disastrous effects of climate change have become a tough reality all over the OSCE region: Be it the toxic clouds of the dying Aral Sea, the melting Perma Frost in Siberia, the burning Mediterranean, the combination of never experienced drought with catastrophic floods in Central Europe, or the melting glaciers in Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Alps and the Arctic; a phenomenon that contributes to further warming and aggravating water scarcity all over the region.

Time is crucial! Hence, Climate Change is not a future threat, it is part of our reality, we cannot turn back the clock and there is no vaccine against it. We only can try to adapt to its dangerous effects and, we have the obligation to avoid further deterioration! In particular the OSCE region, which has the highest climate damaging emissions per capita on the globe.

Furthermore, according to the recent “State of the Climate”-Report of the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration we have reached the highest carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere since a million years.

Hence, politics must act: Immediately, effectively and honestly! We, the OSCE, are part of the multilateral political setting that must respond. The unique concept of comprehensive security allows us to contribute our part to mitigate the impacts on security. Common action is indispensable, but one major player has excluded herself by an unprovoked attack on another participating State, diverting all our attention and efforts to a senseless and tragic war instead of trying to address commonly the major threats of Climate Change. Beyond this, Russia’s war against Ukraine is even accelerating huge amounts of CO₂ emissions from massive destruction of infrastructure and explosion of ammunition, fuel deposits and many more.

Furthermore, the gross violation of fundamental OSCE principles impedes the OSCE to unfold its full potential in particular in the political field.

Nevertheless, the OCEEA is leading with example by bringing participating States together in countering the impacts of Climate Change, in particular through tailor made programmes and projects.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The decisions that need to be taken will profoundly change the way of our live in order to save not only human lives on earth, but live and biodiversity on the planet. If the right decisions are taken, they will change profoundly our way of doing business, of production, of agriculture, of housing, of construction, of consuming, of mobility, of tourism, nearly any sector of economy and private life will be affected. This sounds challenging, even scaring, but each of us can give his or her personal contribution.

Hence, let me therefore end on a more personal note, by referring to a concept of the Viennese geneticist, Prof. Markus Hengstschläger, who defines our situation vis-à-vis Climate Change as a “crisis of participation”: There are large parts of our societies whom he calls “optimists”. These are the ones, who always trust that there will be a way out, there will be technical and scientific progress, “they” – whoever that is – “will manage it”. Opposite to these people are the “pessimists”, who state, that everything is already too late, that we have missed our opportunities.

Prof. Hengstschläger instead introduces a third category: the “possibilists”. These are the ones who look for whatever they can contribute in their personal working and living environment in order to avoid further climate deterioration.