



**Building Stability through Environmental Cooperation-  
OSCE Case Studies**

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**Roundtable A: Diplomacy-I: Resources and Conflict: Policy  
Responses - Continued**

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Security studies recognise the interdependence between poverty and stability and much of the thinking about the concept of “environmental security” has moved beyond a presumed causal relationship between environmental stress and violent conflict to a broader notion of “human security” – a more inclusive concept focusing on the intricate sets of relationships between environment, society and security.

Among environmental factors, water resources – including their scarcity, distribution, and quality aspects – have been recognised as a potential factor that can lead to political pressures. A number of case studies of OSCE water related projects will be presented below to exemplify the OSCE’s role and interest working with environmental issues. In addition a larger joint initiative involving OSCE, UNDP and UNEP and dealing with environmental risks to security in general will be briefly introduced.

**Water and Security**

In the world there are 261 watersheds which cross the political boundaries of two or more countries. These international basins cover 45.3% of the land surface of the earth, affect about 40% of the world’s population, and account for approximately 60% of global river flow. In OSCE region there are 104 watersheds shared by two or more countries, 14 between Canada and USA, 71 in Europe, 19 in Asia. These basins have certain characteristics that make their management especially difficult, most notable of which is that these basins require co-operation of sovereign, independent political units. Disparities between riparian nations – whether in economic development, infrastructural capacity, or political orientation – add very serious complications to water resources development, institutions and management.

There are some good news. While water has been the cause of conflicts within and between countries, and raising water scarcity could make water wars more likely in the future, history tells us otherwise. Water has been a basis for co-operation more often than cause for wars. Riparians have shown tremendous creativity in approaching regional co-operation, often through preventive diplomacy, and the creation of “baskets of benefits” which allow for positive-sum allocations of water between various partners and different users.

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## The role of the OSCE

OSCE participating states concerned by the potential instability threats posed by unsustainable water uses, yet aware of the opportunities offered by water management for building confidence and fostering greater co-operation, decided to choose the sustainable use and the protection of the quality of water as topic of the Tenth OSCE Economic Forum<sup>2</sup> held in May 2002.

To follow up the recommendations made at the Economic Forum<sup>3</sup>, the Office of the Co-ordinator for OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) in partnership with specialised organisations, identified a number of projects that aim at addressing water related security risks and at promoting dialogue and co-operation on sustainable water management. The projects are aimed to contribute to the enhancement of conflict prevention mechanisms and strengthening of processes of confidence building and post conflict rehabilitation.

Water in Central Asia is a primary issue of concern to the extent that conflict of interests among water uses and users, could be in the long run, if not addressed effectively and in a timely manner, an element of destabilization<sup>4</sup>.

Referring to the conclusions drawn by central Asian delegates to the regional meeting on Environment and Security held in Ashgabad<sup>5</sup> in January 2003 reasons for the gap between the existing policy processes and their implementation included difficulties related to:

- lack of co-ordination and co-operation, between governments (and between donors)
- difficulties generating political will both internally (to take action) and internationally (to co-operate)
- lack of funding and internal capacity
- incomplete implementation of laws, and difficulties ensuring rule of law
- lack of technological capacities, monitoring & data management systems
- lack of international and regional experience in these issues
- lack of policy integration across policy spheres (industrial development, foreign policy, agriculture, environment).

OSCE has a role to play, with its regional presence and its specific mandate to promote political dialogue. OSCE can and should foster the generation of political will, and develop activities and projects targeted to enhancing co-operation/co-ordination.

OSCE's approach needs to be multi-level:

1. Top level: OSCE should mediate with the Heads of state on conflict of interests, promote contacts and discussion of the issues and bring to the table all parties. Building on the experience of the failed UK-OSCE initiative<sup>6</sup>, it might be wise considering building dialogue on bilateral/trilateral level and hopefully at a later stage on a regional level<sup>7</sup>.

2. Interstate institutional level: OSCE should support the reform and strengthening of existing interstate institutional mechanisms.

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<sup>2</sup> The Tenth Economic Forum was preceded by three preparatory seminars held in Belgrade, Zamora (Spain) and Baku.

<sup>3</sup> The Consolidate Summary of the Tenth OSCE Economic Forum is available at: [www.osce.org/eea](http://www.osce.org/eea)

<sup>4</sup> See for reference the ICG Report N. 34 of May 2002 on "Central Asia: Water and Conflict".

<sup>5</sup> The meeting was organized within the framework of the Environment and Security Initiative (see below), and was attended by experts from all 5 Central Asian states.

<sup>6</sup> The UK took the initiative, under the OSCE auspices, in the year 2000 to organise a regional conference on water. The initiative failed when Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, decided not to participate. This in spite of efforts by the OSCE CiO of the time (Austrian Foreign Minister) to lobby for the activity during a tour in the region.

<sup>7</sup> There is a need to search for areas of shared interests so as to build co-operation to be used as illustration of best practices, as for example in the case of the OSCE-UNECE ongoing project providing assistance to Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan in setting up an interstate water commission on the Chu and Talas rivers (see below).

3. National level: OSCE should address relevant authorities and agencies to raise awareness, identify and define priorities, interests and needs so as to facilitate a process whereby parties in the region depart from their historical or otherwise defined rights and begin to negotiate on the principle of their "needs" and "interests".

4. Local/grass root level: OSCE should raise awareness, build capacity of civil society and local authorities (as for example to promote public participation in decision making) and promote catalyst and confidence building projects (as for example between border Oblasts).

### **Water as a tool for conflict prevention**

The OCEEA is working with UNECE in providing assistance to Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan in setting up an interstate water commission on the Chu and Talas rivers. The implementation of this project not only contributes to an improved co-operation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on the Rivers Chu and Talas, but will also be an example for the whole region on how improved co-operation on transboundary waters could be established and beneficial.

Box 1. In February 2002 governments of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan submitted a request to the UN Economic Commission for Europe and UN Economic Commission for Asia and Pacific for assistance in establishing an intergovernmental transboundary water commission, including developing the Commission statute and other actions aimed at effective implementation of the intergovernmental transboundary water agreement. The UNECE has, in Prague, asked for the active support of the OSCE in establishing such a Commission.

The project is aimed at establishing good governance in managing shared water resources between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan through developing institutional arrangements, policies and procedures; and capacity building activities for effective implementation of the transboundary water agreement signed between the two countries.

Firstly, the project provides assistance in formulating a Statute and rules/ procedures of operation of the joint commission through a series of informal meetings and fact-finding missions to the region and negotiations sessions. Meetings of the respective authorities of the Republics of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and major stakeholders in the region have been arranged with participation of UN and OSCE officials and project consultants. During the project, the Commission statutes, rules and procedures are being developed and adopted by the Parties.

Secondly, the project is promoting development of policies and tools as well as capacity building of the Commission for operation and effective implementation of the agreement through field trips to meet transboundary water commissions' representatives in other regions of Europe and Asia; publication of a brochure on the Commission, and a leaflet on Internet and hard copies; training tailored to the needs of the technical experts involved in implementation of the agreement will be provided.

Thirdly, an overall economic analysis of the water resources is being conducted and policy recommendations for development of economic instruments for sustainable management of the transboundary waters is being developed; results of the study will be published as a report in English and Russian languages.

The Governments of Sweden has provided 61,000 Euro, the United Kingdom 83,000 EUR and the Government of Estonia 15,000 Euro to cover the costs of the project.

### **Water as a tool for confidence building in unstable regions**

In the South Caucasus the OCEEA is promoting co-operation on water management as a confidence building measure.

Currently there are no institutional mechanisms or legal instruments available for water management in the Kura – Araks Basin, no mechanisms for aquifers management and limited availability of - some times obsolete - data and high levels of pollution.

To overcome gaps in unified water standards and bring about a consistent application of international standards throughout the region and to re-establish regional water-monitoring

systems and databases, OSCE and NATO Science for Peace programme had decided to join forces and support the South Caucasus River Monitoring Project.

Quoting Dr. Ferenc László, a consultant to NATO, „development of a system of information exchange in water management contributes to economic and political stability, security and peace in the South Caucasus region”.

Box 2. The OCEEA and the OSCE field presences in the South Caucasus, in co-operation with the NATO Science for Peace Programme, are supporting the project entitled “South Caucasus River Monitoring”.

The implementation of the project started in November 2002 and will be completed in 2005. The project's objective is to re-establish a regional water monitoring system. The project will increase local technical capabilities, establish standard sampling and analysis techniques and will create a model sharing system accessible over the internet. The methodology includes sample and data collection preparation, training, expeditions, laboratory analysis, data management and watershed management infrastructure and system development. Data will be compiled in a unified database placed on a internet site managed by the University of New Mexico, permitting free access to all end users.

The project is funded by the NATO Science for Peace programme, and through the OSCE, by Sweden and Statoil.

Furthermore, the OSCE proposed in a meeting held together with USAID in Tbilisi in November 2002 the establishment of a South Caucasus Water Management Co-ordination Group. The Water Management Co-ordination Group would be an advisory body consisting of representatives from the Governments of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, the international donor community, international organizations and implementing partners working on regional water related projects in the South Caucasus. The proposal should be interpreted as a process which would eventually bring from a current situation of unilateral actions, through stages of co-ordination and collaboration to, hopefully, the establishment of a regional water body.

The role and functions of the Water Management Co-ordination Group would be to:

- a. ensure timely and smooth flow of information on completed, ongoing and planned programmes and projects between the members of the Group;
- b. facilitate the co-ordination of donor initiatives in the sector with an objective to ensure complementarity and synergy of effort and avoid duplication;
- c. formulate recommendations to the respective donors agencies and/or government representatives for priority action in areas in need within the water sector.

OCEEA together with UNECE and with support from local NGO and OSCE field missions have entered into a dialogue with the riparian governments to the Dniestr River to raise their awareness of the need for regional co-operation in management of- and a co-ordinated legal regime for- the Dniestr.

The long-term intention is to bring Ukraine and Moldova, including Transdniestrian authorities, to joint negotiations of a Dniestr Agreement. The connection of this activity to that of the Transdniestrian conflict lies in the element of confidence building and normalization of relations that results from having Moldovan authorities and local authorities of the Transdniestrian region taking part in joint negotiations.

### **Water as a tool for post conflict rehabilitation**

Under the auspices of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe the four riparian states of the Sava River – Republic of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Republic of Slovenia – signed on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 2002 the Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin. The intention of these states to enter into negotiations was announced the first time at an OSCE preparatory Seminar to the Economic Forum.

The OSCE has followed the process ever since and was proud to host the first meeting of the Interim Sava Basin Commission in April 2003

To implement the provisions of the Framework Agreement an Action Plan has been developed. The purpose of the Action Plan is to provide a framework for identifying, prioritizing, scheduling, and managing activities and projects needed to execute the Framework Agreement for the Sava River Basin. The development of protocols is key to the success in the implementation of the agreement and requires a good deal of efforts to mediate interests. OSCE will provide technical assistance to delegations in the elaboration of the draft protocols and facilitate the negotiation process.

OSCE is also developing a project jointly with UNITAR and UNDP to support capacity building at local/community level targeting border municipalities along the Sava River.

### **ENVSEC Initiative**

Lastly, the OSCE, UNDP and UNEP are heading an initiative to promote co-operation on environmental management as a strategy for promoting co-operation and security in south-eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus, the Environment and Security (ENVSEC) initiative. Water is, due to its critical importance, one of the main focus areas of the project. Other key issues include waste and soil degradation.

As environmental conflicts are closely linked not only to environmental stress but also to political and social structures, activities to abate threats need to include these socio-economic and political influencing factors. It is in acknowledging this multifaceted character of the issue at hand that the three organisations, with different mandates, expertise and networks, have decided to join forces in the ENVSEC initiative.

In identifying potential threats to security the ENVSEC initiative works with a broad definition of "conflict," including under that term a continuum ranging from mere differences in the positions of actors, over sporadic use of violence, through to armed conflict. The initiative focuses principally on two sets of issues:

1. Environmental sources of stress between communities, regions or countries, in particular where these have the potential to undermine social and economic stability and lead to conflict.
2. Tools and approaches that can be used to bring about or strengthen cooperation and good governance between communities, regions and countries so that environmental problems are adequately addressed, social and economic stability is reinforced and conflict is avoided.

The first phase of the initiative consisted of an assessment phase aiming at identifying, in close collaboration with local stake holders, the key environmental threats that might also have security implications. A mapping team from UNEP GRID mapped out in graphical form the priorities identified in the initial assessment. The intention behind this somewhat simplified visualisation of risk factors in maps is to raise the awareness of the issues, put them higher up on the political agenda and provide a foundation in the regions concerned for further co-operative action and empowerment around environmental concerns. The effort also served to identify and reach agreement on key issues that would remedy further action and careful monitoring.

Within the framework of the ENVSEC programme, the partner organisations and local stakeholders then developed activities designed specifically to deal with the priority issues identified. The Initiative is basically structured in three distinct but interlinked pillars, dealing with

a) vulnerability assessment and monitoring; Vulnerability assessment, development of appropriate indicators, setting up of an integrated database and the establishment of a long-term monitoring system are to be facilitated and promoted. Regional stakeholder dialogues will initially concentrate on information sharing, data exchange, knowledge networking and

indicators for early warning. The monitoring system will also allow us to monitor progress of the initiative and environmental threats to security addressed.

b) capacity building and institutional strengthening: The vulnerability of an economy or a state as a whole to environmental stress depends strongly upon its institutional capabilities - whether or not there are appropriate environmental policy institutions at the national, regional and local levels, such as a functioning environmental administration, legal and economic instruments by which to regulate resource consumption and a monitoring system. It is also a matter of the potential for creating economic alternatives for developing societies, the ability to engage in long-term planning processes, the ability to adopt strategic policies and the integration of state and non-state resources and capabilities.

c) policy development and implementation: Promote the integration of conflict and environment linkages in the full spectrum of policies and programs, from Multilateral Environmental Agreements and Conflict Prevention activities through national, regional and sectoral environmental plans and assessments, while forging links with other assessment efforts, research networks and policy programs.

### **Lessons learned**

Along this process, OCEEA has learned a number of lessons that will guide its work in the development of a more structured approach in addressing environment and security issues.

Disputes on environmental issues can in combination with other factors (such as poverty, inequality and discrimination) cause tensions and ultimately trigger conflicts. At the same time co-operation on environmental management can be a contributing factor in the solution of broader political disputes.

Existing institutions matter and they need to be capable to absorb change, both political and environmental.

Environmental protection can be a catalyst for co-operation because it facilitates building technical, personal and ultimately political relations between parties.

Using a regional approach through technically oriented issues can facilitate the solution of bilateral political disputes. Multilateralism can offer a convenient platform for the deliberation of issues that can be resolved later within that framework bilaterally.

A multilateral approach can provide for common denominators, personal acquaintances and confidence building measures.

Last, but not least, environmentally induced conflicts are to be seen in the political context of international relations. Solutions which do not take into consideration such context have limited chances of achieving sustainable results.

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