

15th OSCE Economic Forum - 2007
**Key Challenges to Ensure Environmental Security and
Sustainable Development in the OSCE Area:
Land Degradation, Soil Contamination and Water Management**

Supporting Document

1 Theme

The 2007 OSCE Spanish Chairmanship proposes the topic of “Key Challenges to Ensure Environmental Security and Sustainable Development in the OSCE Area: Land Degradation, Soil Contamination and Water Management” as the theme for the Economic Forum in 2007.

The proposal of this theme is based on a number of factors, among which:

- The increasing relevance of environmental factors in determining the security of both states and individuals and as vectors for international co-operation;
- The increasing attention paid to these issues on the international scene and therefore the opportunity to establish and strengthen useful partnerships with other actors;
- The need to follow-up and build on the results of previous Economic Fora dealing with issues linked to the proposed topic;
- The opportunity to harmonise the theme of the Economic Forum with the theme of the Review of Commitments as set out in the Maastricht Strategy (UNECE would be asked to present a review of commitments in the environmental field at the Economic Forum 2007; the UNECE would also work on a comprehensive report for the Ministerial Conference Environment for Europe 2007 to be held in Belgrade during the fall);
- The applicability of the theme to a large number of participating States, East and West of Vienna;
- The possibility to meaningfully engage the OSCE Partners for Co-operation and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation

2 Background and Justification

Bonn Document

...The participating States will endeavour to achieve or maintain the following: ... an environmentally sustainable economic growth and development.

...The participating States will, in order to facilitate and promote economic co-operation, undertake comprehensive co-operation between their respective statistical services in the bilateral and multilateral context. The priority areas for such co-operation are the statistics on ... environment.

...The participating States are prepared to exchange information... intend to cooperate in assessing the impact of environmental stress on the population by exchanging relevant data on the effects of environmental pollution

Maastricht Strategy Document

...The OSCE is committed to the achievement of sustainable development, which aims at economic growth and poverty reduction and takes fully into account the impact of human activities on the environment. We support the global action foreseen in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Agenda 21, the Monterrey Consensus, and the internationally agreed development goals, including those in the UN Millennium Declaration, and the Plan of Implementation adopted at the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development.

...Environmental degradation, unsustainable use of natural resources and mismanagement in the processing and disposal of wastes have a substantial impact on the health, welfare, stability and security of our countries and can upset ecological systems. These factors, together with problems of access to resources and negative external effects of pollution, can cause tensions between countries. Ecological disasters resulting from natural causes, economic activities or terrorist acts may also pose a serious threat to stability and security.

...Environmental threats, including risks of natural and manmade disasters, should be identified in a timely fashion and tackled by the common efforts of the participating States.

...We will promote training on the environment and security for national, regional and local administrations, as well as for the business community, and will promote capacity-building and research programme.

...We will regularly assess the state of our environment, building on the work already done by international organizations in the UN system such as UNECE, UNEP, UNDP, WMO and FAO. In this regard, we support further development of the UNEP-UNDP-OSCE Environment and Security Initiative. We also support closer cooperation with the Environment for Europe process, building on the outcome of the Fifth Ministerial Conference, held in Kiev in 2003.

Common Purpose: Towards a More Effective OSCE – Final Report and Recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons

...Activities in the economic and environmental dimension should reflect the OSCE's role as a comprehensive security organisation. A good example is the Environment and Security Initiative, where the OSCE adds value regarding the security aspect, whereas the UNDP incorporates the development aspect and the UN Environment Program (UNEP) the environmental aspect;

...Environmental problems have important security aspects in fields that the OSCE could address, inter alia the growing problem of environmental refugees and internally displaced persons;

...Public-private partnership is crucial to achieve environmentally sustainable

growth. The OSCE should promote the UN's Global Compact Initiative and similar initiatives.

3 Goal and modalities

The overall goal of the Economic Forum will be to better understand, raise awareness and recommend actions on the security implications of land degradation, soil contamination and water management in the OSCE Area. At the same time, by simultaneously reviewing the Commitments in the environmental field, gaps to be filled and opportunities for further action can be identified.

Highlighting the interrelation of these sub-topics will be also a main objective, in order to assess the influence of both land and water managements in preventing natural disasters like floods or landslides, and their security implications and improving the protection of surface and groundwater against pollution caused by inadequate land use.

The Economic Forum, while overall focused on environmental security and cooperation, will be split into two parts, one part dealing with land degradation and soil contamination and a second part dealing with water management. It is envisaged that two Preparatory Conferences previous to the Forum will take place outside Vienna, while the Economic Forum part I will be organized in Vienna and the Economic Forum part II will take place in Prague.

4 Land degradation and soil contamination

According to estimates, on the whole planet, 1035 million hectares (ha) are affected by human induced soil degradation¹ (equivalent to the size of Canada). Land degradation and soil contamination is a topic of high relevance for the OSCE's Economic and Environmental Dimension due to its impact on security, cooperation, economic development and the environment.

With over 16 per cent of the EU's land affected by soil degradation,² possibly more than a third of the land affected in Central and Eastern Europe, and Central Asian countries affected or severely affected by drought and desertification³, land degradation has become a matter of concern for OSCE participating States.

Due to nutrient loss, salinisation and desertification, agriculture will experience a decrease in productivity, which will create incentives for people to migrate to other areas, creating tensions over increasingly scarce resources elsewhere. Equally, land erosion increases the number of natural disasters such as landslides or flooding, creating economic setbacks and displacing people.

Soil stores about as much carbon as oceans do. Soil-loss will thus certainly speed up global warming, further increasing the frequency of droughts and other natural disasters.

¹ International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

² Soil Atlas of Europe.

³ United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

A common and major concern for the OSCE area is the pollution of soil due to industrial and military legacies such as the mining industry, large industrial compounds or military and weapon-test sites situated mainly in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus. The OSCE has already been active in remediation of military bases and removal of dangerous substances that hamper economic development and threaten the environment.

Objectives:

- To better understand the economic and security implications of land degradation and contaminated soils, from its root causes (nutrient loss, salinisation, deforestation, soil pollution, overgrazing) to its effects (desertification, groundwater pollution, loss of economic livelihood and agricultural productivity loss, land slides, climate change, natural disasters, migration and social instability);
- To foster political dialogue and define the role of the public and private sector in preventing land degradation;
- To develop good governance principles on land administration;
- To identify environment and security links to topics already discussed at previous Economic Fora (e.g. Environmentally induced migration).

5 Water management

The challenges related to water resources and water management span from areas that are threatened by shortages of clean drinking water due to droughts, to other areas where water pollution is the main problem. Economic sectors such as tourism or industry can be seriously affected by the mismanagement of water resources.

Within the OSCE region there are 180 watercourses that extend over the territory of more than one country⁴. Moreover, due to the increase of countries within the OSCE region from 35 to 55 in the span of the last 15 years, rivers once governed by the authority of one single country are now subject to the sovereignty of two, three or more countries.

OSCE participating States concerned by the potential threats posed by unsustainable water usage, 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 held in May 2002. Following the recommendations of the Economic Forum, the OCEEA and the OSCE Field Missions developed a series of activities and projects.

Revisiting the progress of the projects, assessing the added value of the OSCE and the partnerships established will provide the OSCE and the participating States with indicators of successful project implementation and more clear vision as to future priorities.

⁴ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Objectives:

- To better understand the OSCE role in supporting the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and in particular Millennium Development Goal 7;
- To foster political dialogue and define the role of the public and private sector in water management;
- To develop good governance principles on water management;
- To identify environment and security links to topics already discussed at previous Economic Fora (e.g. transport corridors on water bodies).

6 Potential Partners

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
Ramsar Convention on Wetlands
UN Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD)
UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
UN Economic Commission for Asia Pacific (UNESCAP)
UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)
United Nations University (UNU)
World Health Organization (WHO)
World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)
Global Plan on Action on Land based Pollution (GPA)
Global Water Partnership (GWP)
International Council for Science (ICSU)
International Forum on Forests and the International Forest Principles (IFF)
International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)
Network for Contaminated Land in Europe (NICOLE)
The World Resources Institute (WRI)
World Conservation Union (IUCN)
Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC)

Asian Development Bank (ADB)
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)
European Commission (EC)
European Environment Agency (EEA)
Global Environment Facility (GEF)
World Bank (WB)