

## III-A. Profile of ENVSEC Initiative

Version 1 – 15 July 2006



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### 1. What is the Environment and Security Initiative about? <sup>1</sup>

There is a growing understanding that environmental degradation, inequitable access to natural resources and transboundary movement of hazardous materials increase the probability of conflict and thereby pose a risk to human and even national security. For example, transboundary pollution often negatively affects the relations between neighbouring states sharing the common resource base. Also health risks and involuntary migration due to e.g. water scarcity, equitable access to land resources, uncontrolled stocks of obsolete pesticides or other forms of hazardous waste have been identified as threats to stability and peace.

Ongoing disputes and disagreements over the management of natural resources shared by two or more states can deepen divides and lead to hostilities. However, common problems regarding the use of natural resources may also bring people together in a positive manner. Communities and nations can build confidence with each other through joint efforts to improve the state and management of natural resources. Environmental co-operation can thereby act as an important tool for preventing conflicts and promoting peace between communities.

The Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) seeks to facilitate a process whereby key public decision-makers in South Eastern and Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus are able to motivate action to advance and protect peace and the environment at the same time.

### 2. What is ENVSEC doing?

The ENVSEC Initiative works to assess and address environmental problems, which threaten or are perceived to threaten security, societal stability and peace, human health and/or sustainable livelihoods, within and across national borders in conflict prone regions. The Initiative collaborates closely with governments, particularly foreign, defense and environment ministries, national experts and NGOs. Together with the stakeholders ENVSEC has carried out assessments and published reports illustrated by maps, for understanding the linkages between environment and security in the political and socio-economic reality of South Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia. Based on the assessments, the Initiative develops and implements work programmes aimed at reducing tensions and solving the problems identified. Through extensive regional consultations and multi-stakeholder participation the initiative seeks to:

- Identify environment and conflict hotspots by carrying out desk and field assessments
- Present the results of the assessments in graphically rich maps, reports and web site and draw the attention of politicians and people to situations and hot spots where risks are high
- Help societies to deal with priority issues by raising awareness, building capacities and strengthening institutions
- Support concrete action and catalyse specific solutions for the identified security-relevant environmental problems on the ground

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<sup>1</sup> The source for all information in this profile is <http://www.envsec.org/>

These challenges are being tackled with a combination of political, socio-economic and environmental insights as well as the capacity and skills of the six partners. ENVSEC also collaborates with think tanks and research institutes to increase the understanding of the interdependency of natural resources, socio-economic development and political stability.

### 3. Who is involved?

It was established in 2003 by the [United Nations Environment Programme \(UNEP\)](#), the [United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\)](#), and the [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe \(OSCE\)](#). The [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation \(NATO\)](#) became an associate member of the Initiative in 2004, through its Public Diplomacy Division. From 2006 onwards the Initiative is strengthened with two new members: the [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe \(UNECE\)](#); and the [Regional Environment Center for Central and Eastern Europe \(REC\)](#).

ENVSEC is governed by a Management Board, which consists of representatives of the partner agencies. The ENVSEC activities are co-ordinated by the ENVSEC Secretariat consisting of two bodies: (i) a coordination unit comprised of a Coordination Officer and Regional Desk Officers from the partner organizations, and (ii) an administrative unit hosted by UNDP Regional Centre for Europe and the CIS.

An Advisory Board comprised of donors, national government focal points from recipient countries and other stakeholders provides scientific and policy advice for the Initiative through annual meetings.

The initiative is open for collaboration with potential partners in the countries, regions and internationally.

### 4. The ENVSEC Initiative Projects

Following is a brief description of each the areas in which ENVSEC is active including a list of specific projects in each area. Full details of each project as well as maps and satellite images, publications and additional resources are available on the ENVSEC website at: <http://www.envsec.org/index.php>

#### Central Asia

<http://www.envsec.org/centasia/index.php>

Central Asia encompasses **Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan**, five countries positioned half-way between the Atlantic and the Pacific, the Tien-Shan mountains and the Caspian Sea. The region is rich in natural resources, which have been industrially exploited and processed for decades, often leading to considerable environmental pollution and degraded land. Decades of Uranium mining has left the region with poorly maintained radioactive waste storage sites. Kazakhstan's already high level of natural radiation is increased by the remnants of nuclear test sites including the famous Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground. Current and historical industrial pollution remains an environmental as well as a security threat throughout the region. Also the dried-up Aral Sea will probably remind generations to come that managing transboundary basins with many competing interests is not an easy task.

The in-depth assessment of environment and security risks in the Ferghana Valley was completed and published in 2005. It is now the basis for an extensive work programme, which focuses on the management of land and water resources, pollution from hazardous

waste dumps and industrial activities, natural disasters, and biodiversity issues. Continuing projects in the region include media tour and training courses for professional journalists raising awareness of environment and security links in Central Asia, opening of Public Environmental Information Centres, and supporting environmental journalism festivals. Projects on natural disaster mitigation in local communities, capacity building of local environmental laboratories for radioactivity analysis and monitoring, studies of hazardous waste disposal and environment and health assessment are also currently being carried out in the boarder regions of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Other assessments in Central Asia region will concentrate on the East Caspian region, and the Amu-Darya river basin, and will start in the second half of 2006.

### Central Asia ENVSEC Projects

- In-depth field assessment of environment & security hot spots in the Ferghana – Osh – Khudjand triangle and adjacent areas
- Rapid environment and health risk assessment
- Establishment of environmental early warning system
- Community based natural disaster management in high-risk border areas of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan
- Training in investigative journalism with respect to Environment and Security issues and linkages
- Support to environmental festivals in Central Asia
- Institutional support to the Aarhus convention (Aarhus centres)
- Uranium Waste and tailings Sites in the Ferghana Valley
- Assessment and Mitigation of Seismic Risk in Tashkent, Uzbekistan and Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic
- Sustainable Development of Ecology and Land and Water use through Implementation of a GIS and Remote Sensing Center in Karakalpakstan, Uzbekistan
- SEMIRAD I - Investigation of the Radiological Situation in the Sarzhal Region of the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site
- SEMIREAD II - Investigation of the Radiological Situation in the Sarzhal Region of the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site
- Study of Radioactive Waste Disposal Sites in Turkmenistan
- Improved Land and Water Resource Management in the Upper Syr Darya Basin in the Context of Sustainable Development
- ENVSEC Phase 1 assessment of Environment and security risks and opportunities in Central Asia

### Eastern Europe

<http://www.envsec.org/easteur/index.php>

The region comprising **Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine** is one of the most industrialized areas within the former Soviet Union. This as well as dense population, important transportation networks, intensive agriculture account for both the strategic importance of the region and its omnipresent environmental challenges. Among these are the still-present consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear accident; environmental risks of industrial and military heritage; management of shared waterbasins such as the Dnieper and the Dniester; and, most recently, the need to secure an independence and efficient use of energy supply hopefully at a minimum environmental cost.

Frozen conflicts or tensions in parts of the region (Transnistria in Moldova, the South-East of Ukraine) weaken resistance of countries and communities to environmental threats and their capacity to address them. Such situations on the other hand define needs and opportunities for non-political mitigation of instability. Not least, strategic location on the border of the European Union makes the region particularly sensitive to global and continental geopolitical challenges.

Environment and Security assessment in Eastern Europe was initiated in cooperation with the three governments in 2005. A series of multi-agency consultations took place in the countries in May-June 2006. Meetings have helped to identify, confirm and detail key threats faced by the region on the interface between the environment and security, as well as to discuss needs and opportunities to act. ENVSEC assessment for Eastern Europe will be presented to donors and the international audience for the first time at OSCE's Meeting of the Economic Forum in January 2007, along with a proposed work programme of ENVSEC-facilitated activities.

### Eastern Europe ENVSEC Projects

- ENVSEC Phase 1 assessment of Environment and Security risks and opportunities in Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova
- Transboundary cooperation and sustainable management of the Dniester river
- Rocket fuel disposal workshop and assessment in Ukraine
- Real Time Monitoring and Decision Support Systems for International Rivers:
  - Application to the Nistru and Prut River
- Monitoring and Assessment of Heavy Metal Pollution in River Prut, an important Transboundary Water Resource

### South Eastern Europe

<http://www.envsec.org/see/index.php>

South-Eastern Europe (SEE) covers **Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo** (territory under UN administration). The past decade of war, conflict and transition has left the region with a legacy of inadequate growth, declining living standards and high environmental stress. The region is mainly affected by heavy industrial pollution in urban-industrial areas, intensive agriculture with yet uncalculated health impacts, a lack of water technology and infrastructure, and industrial pollution from the mining sector. Shared resources such as transboundary lakes and rivers as well as

biodiversity (e.g. in the Carpathian mountains) pose both a challenge and opportunity for cooperation.

Mining in South Eastern Europe has been identified as a sector requiring specific attention, and is the focus of several regional cooperation projects. Five demonstration projects will be finalised and launched in the period of 2006-2008 under the umbrella of the project "Environment and Security in South Eastern Europe: Improving regional cooperation for risk management from pollution hotspots as well as transboundary management of shared regional resources". The publication 'Mining for Closure' produced in 2005 by the ENVSEC partners provides guidelines for sustainable mining in the region. Other key sectors for the region are cooperation on the protection of natural resources and biodiversity, such as park management, reducing the amounts of pesticides used in agriculture, and moving towards a multi lateral agreement towards protecting mountain regions.

### South Eastern Europe ENVSEC Projects

- Reducing Environment & Security Risks from Mining in South Eastern Europe
- Rapid Environmental Assessment of the Tisza River Basin, including environment & security
- Enhancing Transboundary Biodiversity Management in South Eastern Europe
- Network Development of Local Actors from the Sava River Basin on Water resource Management
- Feasibility Study for Lojane Mine Cleaning and Closure
- Cross-border Environmental Monitoring and Early Warning Systems
- Building Cooperation in the Prespa Park Region
- Improving Integrated Water Resources Management in the Tisza River Basin
- Postgraduate Course on Environment, Security and Diplomacy

### Southern Caucasus

<http://www.envsec.org/southcauc/index.php>

The Southern Caucasus, composed of **Armenia**, **Azerbaijan**, and **Georgia**, has long been a focal point for change and a bridge between Asia and Europe. The region is in the midst of a tumultuous transition and has seen multiple inter-state and ethnic conflicts in its recent past, some of them escalating to full-scale warfare. In this context, the lack of regional cooperation threatens to exacerbate environmental issues, themselves a source of potential conflict in the region. Among the environmental concerns identified by ENVSEC in the Southern Caucasus are the management of shared natural resources (not least in the Kura-Araks river basin which covers a large part of the region), pollution from ageing industries and irrigation networks, and uncontrolled growth of capital cities. Disagreements about real or perceived environmental threats, such as those related to the environmental conditions of the 'frozen conflict' zones, Metzamor nuclear power plant or the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan trans-regional pipeline further complicate the picture. On the positive side there are quite a few opportunities to foster cooperation between the countries in the environmental field.

The ENVSEC assessment of environment and security linkages in the Southern Caucasus was completed and presented at the Ministerial meeting of EECCA countries in Tbilisi on October 22, 2004. ENVSEC has identified the frozen conflict zones in South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Abkhazia as areas where more detailed assessment can help facilitate a broader understanding of current environmental challenges.. ENVSEC has supported monitoring and management of the Kura-Araks river basin, strategic environmental assessments, the establishment of public environmental information centres (“Aarhus centres”), and media training. In the view of reducing tensions in mountainous areas and promoting cooperation for protection and sustainable management, ENVSEC also supports transboundary cooperation on the protection of the Caucasus mountains. The process of negotiating a legal framework will proceed in 2006, and it is closely linked to a similar mountain protection project in South Eastern Europe.

### **Southern Caucasus ENVSEC Projects**

- Training in investigative journalism with respect to Environment and Security issues and linkages
- Institutional support to the Aarhus convention (Aarhus centres)
- ENVSEC Phase 1 assessment of Environment and Security risks and opportunities in the South Caucasus
- Assessment of underground water in the Kura-Aras river basin, including UNDP project on Public involvement in reduction of transboundary degradation in the basin
- Assessment and neutralization of hazardous chemicals in abandoned military sites in Armenia
- ENVSEC in-depth assessment of environmental degradation in frozen conflict zones in the South Caucasus
- Strategic Environmental Assessment – Promotion and Capacity Building
- Environment and Security in the South Caucasus Triangle
- Radio Bridges
- Seismic Risk in large Cities of Caucasus, Tools for Risk Management (SeRiCiCau)
- Training in investigative journalism with respect to Environment and Security issues and linkages
- Special Issue of the “Caucasus Environmental Magazine”
- South Caucasus Cooperative River Monitoring