

**World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction  
Preparatory Committee  
Second session  
Geneva, 17-18 November 2014**

**Statement of Ms. Desiree Schweitzer,  
Deputy Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to take part in this 2nd preparatory meeting, and I would like to express my gratitude for again having the possibility to address you.

To consolidate its strategic direction on environmental and economic issues, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe annually organizes the Economic and Environmental Forum dedicated to major issues of concern for security. The Forum process brings together governments, civil society, international organizations, the private sector and academia facilitating a dynamic dialogue, partnership and synergies between different stakeholders. In 2014, it focussed on "Responding to environmental challenges with a view to promoting co-operation and security in the OSCE area". Under the leadership of the Swiss 2014 OSCE Chairmanship, this year's Forum ensured an in-depth and comprehensive discussion of how the OSCE participating States can cope with disaster-related challenges to their security.

The deliberations demonstrated the importance of incorporating a security perspective into disaster risk reduction discussions. There is ample room for deepening the understanding of the complex linkages between security and disasters, including disasters prompted by climate change. This will also help address such events more effectively, both within countries and in a transboundary context. Let me briefly elaborate on these linkages and the aspects relevant in view of today's and tomorrow's negotiations on the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction.

First, disasters have the potential to lead to increased tensions and aggravate existing conflicts. In addition, disaster-induced migration and displacement of persons can create tensions in neighbouring areas.

Second, conflicts can be disaster risk escalators as they tend to decrease the capacity of authorities to manage disaster risks, and at the same time they can affect people's vulnerability to disasters. These conditions have the potential to further aggravate political instability.

Third, disasters can affect security and stability in a transboundary context which calls for bilateral and regional co-operation in preparedness and prevention as well as in response and

recovery efforts. Disaster risk reduction can provide an opportunity to foster co-operation and confidence-building within societies and across boundaries and serve as a useful tool in diminishing tensions.

These linkages between disasters and security are also the rationale for the Swiss Chairmanship to strive for consensus on a Ministerial Decision on Disaster Risk Reduction at this year's OSCE Ministerial Meeting in Basel in early December. If adopted, this decision would reinforce the OSCE's commitments on DRR and guide our further contributions to comprehensive security and increased resilience.

The devastating floods in the Western Balkans in May this year demonstrated how states affected by a transboundary disaster can actively co-operate across borders to ensure an adequate response. Let me mention that next year's Economic and Environmental Forum under the Serbian OSCE Chairmanship is dedicated to the topic "Water governance in the OSCE area – increasing security and stability through co-operation". It will focus, inter alia, on water governance within the context of disaster risk reduction, including issues such as flood prevention and water scarcity.

Finally, the OSCE's comprehensive security mandate enables the Organization to address disaster risks from different perspectives and at different levels – from the regional to the national and community levels. In doing so, the OSCE - the world's largest regional security organization - is well placed to draw on its substantial expertise within each security dimension it embraces (political-military, economic and environmental and human dimension) as well as building on its political clout in the region and the existing partnerships with other International Organizations, such as the Environment and Security Initiative - ENVSEC. Most of the OSCE projects and activities related to disaster risk reduction are implemented within the framework of the ENVSEC Initiative where the OSCE partners with UNEP, UNDP, UNECE, the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) and NATO as an associate partner. As we look into the future of the HFA 2 process, organizations like the OSCE may also be needed to translate the global commitments into concrete actions at the regional level.

Thank you.