



2013-14 ACTIVITY REPORT

Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE
Economic and Environmental Activities

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Dear reader,

My colleagues and I are pleased to present to you a new annual Activity Report. Exceptionally, it covers the period of the 2014 and the second half of 2013. Future reports will follow the calendar year pattern.

During the period of time covered by the report, my colleagues in Vienna and in the OSCE field operations, in particular the Economic and Environmental Officers, have been working hard and doing their utmost to respond to the high level of expectations of the participating States.

First and foremost, we actively supported the Ukrainian 2013 Chairmanship and the Swiss 2014 Chairmanship to facilitate a dialogue among participating States that was aimed at promoting international co-operation on economic and environmental issues and strengthening security and stability throughout the OSCE region. We did this in the framework of the Economic and Environmental Forum that focused on *Improving the Environmental Footprint of Energy-related Activities in the OSCE region* in 2013 and on *Responding to Environmental Challenges with a view to Promoting Co-operation and Security in the OSCE area* in 2014. As a direct result of the Forum's meetings outcomes and recommendations, two Ministerial Council decisions were adopted in Kyiv and two in Basel which contributed to the already existing mandates in the fields of energy and environment. The Economic and Environmental Dimension Implementation Meetings as well as the regular meetings of the Economic and Environmental Committee further contributed to an enhanced dialogue.

As in previous years, we continued the process to focus even closer on the OSCE's core strengths in the Economic and Environmental Dimension.

We paid increased attention to promoting good governance, an area of work where we received a strong and clear mandate through the *2012 Dublin Declaration*, complemented recently by the *2014 Basel Ministerial Council Decision on Prevention of Corruption*. My Office organised both regional and national events

and training activities covering topics such as integrity standards and the role of civil society, anti-corruption strategies, asset declarations of public officials, as well as national risk assessments in the area of anti-money laundering. The *OSCE Handbook on Data Collection in support of Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing National Risk Assessment* continued to be a useful tool for practitioners in the field. Simplification of regulations to stimulate economic activities, through so-called *Guillotine projects* in Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, along with supporting free economic zones and cross border markets at the Tajik-Afghan border and promotion of public-private partnerships are further examples of our commitment to good governance and of the added value the OSCE can bring.

Improving transport interconnectivity across the OSCE region as well as simplification and harmonization of border crossing procedures remained high on our agenda. We continued to co-operate with the *OSCE Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe* and organised joint training activities based on the *OSCE-UNECE Handbook of Best Practices at Border Crossings*.

The *2007 Madrid Declaration on Environment and Security* continued to guide us in promoting environmental co-operation within and across borders. The *2014 Basel Ministerial Council Decision on Enhancing Disaster Risk Reduction* has given a new impetus to the activities of my Office in this field. Water continued to remain high on OSCE's agenda. The Security Days Event on Water Diplomacy reinforced the OSCE's role in promoting water co-operation.

During the reporting period, we continued to build national and local capacities to address the multifaceted linkages between environment and security. We worked on a broad variety of issues such as wildfire management in the South Caucasus; water co-operation between Georgia and Azerbaijan, and in Central Asia, including between Tajikistan and Afghanistan. We addressed security implications of climate change across the OSCE region; disaster risk reduction in South Eastern Europe, in particular floods prevention and response; hazardous



*Halil Yurdakul Yigitguden,
Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic
and Environmental Activities*

waste management in Eastern Europe. My Office also organised an environmental assessment mission to an arsenic mining site in Georgia. Furthermore, we have continued our support for the empowerment of civil society which is crucial for the tackling of environment and security challenges, by continuing our support to the network of over 50 Aarhus Centres in 14 OSCE participating States and also running a small grants programme for NGOs named Civic Action for Security and Environment (CASE) in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan.

The Second Participatory Workshop on Environment and Security Issues in the Southern Mediterranean Region that my Office organised in Vienna in December 2014 aimed at mapping the environment and security challenges in the region and also enabled sharing experiences of the OSCE participating States and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

Let me also highlight two anniversaries, success stories of our committed engagement: In 2013 we marked ten years of the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) – a partnership of six international organizations: the OSCE, UNDP, UNECE, UNEP, REC, and NATO as an associated partner. We also celebrated ten years since the OSCE became actively involved in supporting the implementation of the Aarhus Convention.

Last but not least, I am happy to see the new impetus the OSCE energy dialogue and energy related activities have received during the reporting period. In addition to our engagement in energy security and sustainable energy, our mandate was strengthened by two MC Decisions adopted in Kyiv, on *Improving the Environmental Footprint of Energy-related Activities in the OSCE Region*, and on *Protection of Energy Networks from Natural and Man-made Disasters*.

We plan to continue and consolidate our engagement in all the above-mentioned areas of work and I hope that you will find some interesting and useful information in this report. I would highly appreciate your feed-back, ideas and suggestions, so that we could be more effective in tackling our common challenges, and better respond to the needs of participating States, communities and citizens.

Yours truly,

Halil Yurdakul Yiğitgüden

Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities



OSCE Flags in front of the Hofburg, Vienna

Supporting Political Dialogue

Economic and Environmental Forum process

Outcomes of the 21st Economic and Environmental Forum

Drawing upon the deliberations and recommendations of the 21st OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum (EEF), the *Kyiv Ministerial Council* adopted, in December 2013, a Decision on *Improving the Environmental Footprint of Energy-related Activities in the OSCE region* (MC.DEC/5/13).

This decision highlights the linkages between energy-related activities and the environment and notes the transboundary impact of energy production, transportation and consumption. It stresses that a responsible and sustainable management of natural and energy resources can improve the environment, curb climate change, boost economic growth and contribute to security and stability, and acknowledges that affordable, diversified, reliable and sustainable energy supply is an important precondition for sustainable development. Participating States are encouraged by the decision to enhance their dialogue and co-operation, *inter alia*, on good governance and transparency in the energy sector, renewable energy and energy efficiency, new technologies, technology transfer and green growth.

The decision calls for an active engagement of civil society organizations in the development of relevant policy recommendations and for strengthening public-private co-operation in these fields. The Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA), in co-operation with the OSCE field operations, is tasked, *inter alia*, to support awareness raising on the impact of energy-related activities on the environment, including through the Aarhus Centres and other multi-stakeholder initiatives; to promote sustainable energy solutions and foster, where appropriate, transboundary co-operation.

The 22nd OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

In July 2013, participating States decided to devote the 22nd OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum in 2014 to *Responding to Environmental Challenges with a view to Promoting Co-operation and Security in the OSCE area* (PC.DEC/1088). This decision built upon a number of commitments from the OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension and other decisions and documents related to the environment, energy and water management.



H.E. Didier Burkhalter, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, President of the Swiss Confederation, Head of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

Throughout 2014, under the leadership of the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship, the OCEEA has striven to facilitate meaningful discussions among participating States, international organizations, the civil society, academia and the private sector on this topical issue. Such deliberations took place mainly during the three meetings of the 2014 Forum, which registered an overall attendance of more than 600 participants, but also in other formats such as the 2014 Economic and Environmental Dimension Implementation Meeting (EEDIM) and the Economic and Environmental Committee (EEC).



Rescue team drains water using water pumping equipment on Mlava river, Kostolac, Serbia, 2014

Throughout the 2014 Forum process, participants focused on a number of priorities such as: preparedness, resilience, adaptation as well as emergency response and recovery related to environmental challenges; the promotion of partnerships and initiatives covering environment and security issues; good practices in these fields; the promotion of environmental good governance.

The First Preparatory Meeting took place in Vienna on 27-28 January 2014, and the Second one on 19-21 May in Montreux, Switzerland, also featuring a full day of field visits. The Concluding Meeting was held on 10-12 September 2014 in Prague, where over 250 participants had the opportunity to build upon

BASEL MINISTERIAL COUNCIL DECISION NO. 6/14 – ENHANCING DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

(...)

Emphasizing the often cross-boundary nature of environmental challenges, including disasters, Acknowledging that environmental degradation, including disasters, could be a potential additional contributor to conflict and that conflicts, poor governance, mismanagement and degradation of natural resources as well as migratory pressures can affect the vulnerability of society to disasters,

(...)

Noting the exacerbating effect climate change may have on the frequency and magnitude of disasters, (...) Encourages the participating States (...) to strive to adopt an integrated approach to disaster risk management including measures for prediction, prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery at all levels; (...) to develop, co-ordinate and implement, where appropriate, disaster risk reduction measures with climate change adaptation and mitigation plans (...) to promote technological development, innovation, and the transfer of technology and know-how (...) to promote good governance and transparency in the field of disaster risk reduction, to incorporate local knowledge and information into national plans, taking into consideration the capabilities of both men and women and the specific vulnerabilities of children, women, the elderly, the poor, and the disabled, and to actively engage all relevant stakeholders,

(...)

Tasks the OSCE executive structures, in particular the OCEEA, and where possible in co-operation with the OSCE field operations, within their available resources and mandates, to support the participating States upon their request in strengthening disaster risk reduction and management at all levels, and to facilitate co-operation, where appropriate, within and across borders, including by making best use of the OSCE's partnership within the ENVSEC Initiative; (...) to strengthen the exchange of knowledge and experience, (...) to promote community-based and gender/age/disability-sensitive disaster risk reduction, including, where appropriate, through Aarhus Centres, civil society organizations and other multi-stakeholder partnerships and initiatives;

(...)

Management Board and through performing the ENVSEC Regional Desk Office function for the South Caucasus region.

Throughout the reporting period, the OCEEA worked closely with the ENVSEC partners, relevant OSCE field operations, and national stakeholders to implement joint projects on various topics ranging from transboundary water management to hazardous waste management, from disaster risk reduction and addressing the security implications of climate change to the strengthening of civil society.

Advocating disaster risk reduction

Regional activities

Fire management

In 2014, the OCEEA together with its partner - the Global Fire Monitoring Centre (GFMC) - continued to strengthen forest fire management capacities in the South Caucasus. Main outcomes of this work in 2014 include the following: the finalization of national policy documents on wildfire management for Armenia and Georgia as a result of participatory consultation processes and roundtables, and the translation of *EuroFire training materials*^{*} in Armenian, Azerbaijani and Georgian languages. On 15-17 October 2014, the OCEEA organised a *Regional Training Course* on forest fire management in co-operation with the Forestry Directorate of Turkey and the GFMC. Over 50 representatives of fire management authorities and fire brigades from countries of the South Caucasus and Western Balkans participated and learned about concepts and standards of wildfire management and good practices in managing large fire and fires burning on areas contaminated by radioactivity or unexploded ordnance and land mines. Cross-boundary co-operation, community fire management and advanced technologies for fire prevention and preparedness were

^{*} *EuroFire* is an international partnership led by Global Fire Monitoring Centre, funded by the EU Leonardo da Vinci Programme, that has developed a competency based training system for wildfire and prescribed fire management, based on a new learning outcomes approach. Training materials provide necessary knowledge and competencies required for operating at wildfires or carrying out prescribed burning activities. It also includes examples of good practise from Europe and around the world.



Field exercise during the regional fire management training, Antalya, Turkey

also among the focus areas of the training course. The second day was devoted to a practical exercise in the field where the participants studied fire behaviour and fire suppression techniques.

CEDRIG training for OSCE field operations

From May to October 2014, the **OCEEA** in collaboration with the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC) and the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship organised the *Regional Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) & Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) Training (with a CEDRIG Component) for Economic and Environmental Officers in the OSCE field operations*. The training sessions, which took place in May in Tbilisi, for the South Caucasus, in September 2014 in Bishkek, for Central Asia, and in October in Sarajevo, for South Eastern Europe, aimed at strengthening the capacities of the OSCE field operations in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into the OSCE projects and programmes in order to enhance the overall resilience of countries and communities for strengthening capacities on climate change adaptation. Representatives from 13 field operations - Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Montenegro, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, the OCEEA and the Swiss Chairmanship as well as national counterparts from the host countries participated in the trainings. Besides the theoretical part,



Site visit during the CEDRIG training, Tbilisi, May 2014

the trainings incorporated field visits to project sites where disaster risk reduction related projects have been implemented or are in the course of implementation.

Community-based disaster risk reduction

In May 2014, with support from Switzerland and co-funding from Austria and Finland, the **OCEEA** launched a two year ENVSEC project on *Strengthening the Capacities of Aarhus Centres in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) to Enhance Awareness of Local Communities*. The overall aim is providing training and financing pilot activities of Aarhus Centres in disaster-prone areas, thus strengthening the capacities and roles of communities in DRR and contributing to awareness raising using Aarhus Centres as a platform. The project covers seven countries: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Serbia and Tajikistan. The first activities implemented in 2014 were analytical assessment reports: country reports assessing the needs for DRR education in each concerned country and one survey report on respective capacities of the Aarhus Centres. These reports provided the basis for tailor-made *National Training Workshops*, organised by the OSCE field operations together with UNDP and REC. From October to December 2014, training workshops were conducted in Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Tajikistan. The others are planned for February 2015.



Study-visit to Smederevska Palanka, Serbia, December 2014

For example, in **Serbia** the two-day *Training Workshop on Community-based DRR* was held in December 2014 in Belgrade. It focused, *inter alia*, on outreach skills and relevant communication and awareness-raising tools and methodologies. The workshop included a field visit to Smederevska Palanka where participants became acquainted with the strengths and shortcomings of water management practices in this municipality, affected by the floods in May 2014. Participants included local authorities in charge of water management from 7 municipalities in Serbia prone to flooding (Smederevska Palanka, Arandjelovac, Topola, Batočina, Lapovo, Svilajnac and Despotovac) and representatives of the *Aarhus Centres from Subotica, Novi Sad, Kragujevac and Niš*. A similar national training workshop in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, convened with the support of the OSCE Mission in November 2014 and also included a site visit to an area affected by the May floods. In Armenia, the ENVSEC partners jointly with the National DRR Platform, and the State Crisis Management Agency organised a series of three trainings addressing also the implementation of the Local Level Risk Management (LLRM) and on Developing Capacities on Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in Armenia for representatives of 15 Aarhus Centres.

Also in 2014, the OCEEA **started two new projects** with funding from the Government of Switzerland:

Strengthening of Fire Management Capabilities in Mongolia and Selected Central Asia Countries and Restoring Ecosystems to Mitigate Floods and Improve Co-operation between countries in Transboundary River Basins in Eastern Europe.

Field activities

On 4-6 November 2014, a *Regional Conference on Floods in South East Europe - Lessons Learned and Way Ahead* was organised in Sarajevo by the **OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina**, the Ministry of Security of BiH, and the RACVIAC Centre for Security Co-operation in South East Europe and the UNDP Office in BiH. The purpose of the conference was to discuss a regional approach to flood prevention and preparedness, to improve water management and to highlight examples of best practices, with a focus on increased inter-agency and cross-border co-operation. The event was attended by representatives of the Serbia, Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Croatia, Montenegro, Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Representatives of municipal governments from three Bosnia and Herzegovina communities heavily affected by this year's flooding also spoke about the effects that the disaster had on their municipalities and the measures that were taken. Climate change was discussed by experts from the World Meteorological Organization and UNDP, and representatives from the EU discussed the EU Flood

Directives and the harmonization of related domestic laws and regulations in SEE countries. Save the Children also contributed to the event by highlighting the needs of children and other vulnerable groups during natural disasters. A set of conclusions and recommendations from this regional conference will be distributed to the participants and shared with the public for follow-on actions.

Another *Regional Meeting on Ways to Improve Disaster Risk Reduction Practices at Local Level* took place on 26 November 2014 in Belgrade. It focused on tightening the co-operation between civil society and local authorities to better respond to natural disasters caused by floods. Participants included authorities in charge of emergency situations and water management and Aarhus Centres' representatives from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia. Mayors from Bijeljina (BiH) and Paracin (Serbia) municipalities, heavily affected by the 2014 floods, presented challenges and shortcomings in the current disaster preparedness and flood defence practices. Four international experts from Switzerland, Austria and Slovenia shared success stories of addressing flood risks through enhanced public engagement. Participants concluded that enhancing communication between local authorities, located along international rivers was necessary and that DRR-related activities offer multiple opportunities for partnership and co-operation.



Discussions during a Disaster Risk Reduction Regional Meeting, Belgrade, November 2014

In February 2014, the **OSCE Mission to Serbia** organised a *Preparatory Meeting* to introduce the concept of inclusive governance in flood risk management practices. Participants comprised representatives from the Ministry of Energy, Development and Environmental Protection, State Water Directorate, Hydro Meteorological Service, Sector for Emergency Management Sector of the Ministry of Interior, Serbian Chamber of Commerce, Aarhus Centre for South and East Serbia from Nis and the State Broadcasting Company (RTS). Discussions led to the agreement among participants on the necessity to establish a partnership between State and non-state actors in tackling flood risk reduction activities. The Timok river catchment area, located in Zajecar municipality, was identified as a locality to implement joint activities. They also concluded that an awareness raising campaign should be organised for the local community to increase