



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

**Participatory Workshop on Environment and Security Issues in the Southern
Mediterranean Region
18-22 June 2012**

Opening Remarks
OSCE Secretary General
Ambassador Lamberto Zannier

Minister,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be here with you today at the opening of the participatory workshop on environment and security. Let me start by thanking the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for hosting this event. I take this interest as a very good sign.

The main purpose of my visit is to explore venues for increased practical co-operation between the OSCE and Jordan. I am sure that the fruitful discussions I am having with Jordanian Senior Officials during my stay and the outcomes of this workshop will provide useful inputs.

The OSCE Mediterranean Partnership is rooted in the conviction that security in the OSCE area is inextricably interconnected with security in the Mediterranean. This principle was stated already in the CSCE/OSCE founding document adopted in Helsinki in 1975. It was clearly reiterated at the Astana Summit in 2010 and again at the Vilnius Ministerial Meeting in 2011, where the OSCE leaders expressed their commitment to further enhance the Partnership, in particular by sharing experiences and enhancing practical and result oriented co-operation.

The OSCE Mediterranean Partnership is about working together to address shared challenges through dialogue and co-operation.

The topic of this workshop is particularly fit for this purpose, as it is only by working together, across borders and regions, that we can effectively address environment and security challenges, exchanging our experiences and learning how to co-operate more efficiently.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As His Excellency Mr. Ahmad Qatarneh, Secretary General of the Ministry of Environment mentioned in his opening address just a few moments ago the purpose of this workshop is to explore the links between Environment and Security.

I would like to begin with adding some perspective on the starting point of this meeting, often referred to as the “Valencia follow-up project”.

Back in December 2007, the OSCE, in co-operation with the NATO Public Diplomacy Division, organized a workshop on "Water Scarcity, Land Degradation and Desertification in the Mediterranean region, and its Environment and Security Aspects”.

Attended by policy makers, scientists and experts from the Mediterranean region, the meeting assessed the links between water scarcity, land degradation and desertification while it also looked at related security aspects. It facilitated an exchange of views on which specific role the OSCE, NATO and other organizations could play in fostering environment and security in the Mediterranean region.

The meeting also happened within the right context: just a few weeks before this workshop in Valencia, the OSCE had approved a Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Security underlining that environmental cooperation is fundamental to diminish tensions and, eventually, to prevent conflicts.

The OSCE Mediterranean Partners repeatedly expressed their desire to provide a follow-up to the outcomes of the Valencia meeting. In 2009, under the Kazakh Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group, OSCE participating States and Mediterranean Partners agreed to enhance co-operation in the area of environmental challenges to security.

A process of participatory drafting of a project on environment and security issues followed, lead by two consecutive Chairs of the Mediterranean Contact Group, Lithuania in 2010 and Ireland in 2011. The views and requests by the Mediterranean Partners were given primary consideration to ensure full ownership and relevance of the project.

It has been a long learning process, through which Mediterranean Partners and participating States could discuss and work together in devising a joint activity aiming at achieving concrete results in addressing a shared challenges.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The aim of this expert workshop is two-fold.

- First, we would like to identify the environmental issues that may have an impact on security, as well as environmental implications of security policies.
- The second purpose of the workshop is to map, through working groups, potential areas of conflict as well as existing examples of co-operation.

Topics to be discussed are ranging from water management and land degradation to climate change and energy security. And even if the issues of water management and land degradation have not lost their relevance we have to expand the list of environment and security linkages today and include the topics of climate change and energy security.

The link between climate change and security has been increasingly acknowledged. The special session of the Security Council last July on this topic is one of the most prominent examples of this development. Like climate change, energy security policies can be a factor for stability or a cause for conflict and mistrust. What the OSCE as the world's largest regional security organization can offer in this respect is a platform for dialogue and cooperation which is uncontested.

There is one last point I would like to focus on, and that is the role of civil society in shaping policies and in participating in decision making processes which has become more relevant than ever also in the environmental context. In recognition of this fact, the OSCE, for the past years, has been supporting the implementation of the provisions of the so-called Aarhus convention, the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters. As a result of this engagement a network of 38 Aarhus centres in 11 countries in the OSCE region has been successfully set up.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today's workshop aims at delivering concrete results. The maps and the recommendations that will be produced will hopefully turn out to be useful tools for sharing information and facilitating the understanding of the challenges and opportunities the region is facing in connection to environment and security.

During these next days we will share the OSCE experience on various environment-related issues with you, for instance on trans-boundary water management in Central Asia, Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus, on the promotion of renewable energy or on the support to the Aarhus Convention.

To sum it up, our objective for this expert workshop is to move from a checklist of theoretical links of environment and security to the identification of potential or existing challenges in this field and to identify possible solutions through enhanced cooperation.

Let me once again express my gratitude to our host, the government of Jordan, as well as to the governments of Spain and Belgium for their support to the project. With this I wish you fruitful discussions and a successful meeting.

I thank you for your attention and wish you interesting and fruitful discussions.