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**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR LOPEZ JORRIN,
HEAD OF THE TASK FORCE OF THE SPANISH CHAIRMANSHIP OF
THE OSCE, AT THE CLOSING SESSION OF THE 15th MEETING OF
THE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM**

Prague, 23 May 2007

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I think that an initial conclusion of a general nature that we can draw at the end of this 15th Economic and Environmental Forum is that the OSCE should utilize and enhance its function as a forum for dialogue among the participating States and other key players in the areas of environmental security and good governance and of sustainable development. The OSCE can and should help to create and maintain political momentum in these matters.

At the beginning of its Chairmanship, Spain launched a debate on the elaboration of an OSCE Environmental Security Strategy. This is a matter which the Spanish Chairmanship sees as deserving priority; it considers that the issues involved are of great importance and need immediate action, in which the OSCE can take the lead. The process has so far proved to be a dynamic one, generating much interest among experts, related organizations and delegations. We believe that the idea of adopting a document of this type at the Madrid Ministerial Council meeting enjoys wide support. As you know, a first draft for the strategy has recently been circulated in Vienna. I should like here to express appreciation to the experts and the staff of the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities for their support in working on it, as well as for the valuable comments that we have received from various delegations.

During these days in Prague, we have again had the opportunity to consider various items relating to environmental security and to continue the debate on the role of the OSCE. On the basis of these deliberations, we shall review the document and seek to identify those themes that are most relevant in the OSCE context of environmental security and, at the same time, complement other aspects that are already being considered by sister organizations, and allow use to be made of comparative advantages that our Organization may enjoy. We shall also undertake a careful analysis of the possible financial implications of this process.

Soil degradation and contamination, as well as the poor management of water resources and other natural resources, have long-term negative consequences for people's lives. Sustainable management of the soil, of water and of other natural resources is therefore a complex exercise, requiring a long-term commitment and co-operation at various levels,

both within countries and between them, as well as with institutions, civil society and the business community. The OSCE is called upon to play an important role in all these matters.

The Chairmanship would like to take this opportunity to encourage the Office of the Co-ordinator and the field missions to develop and implement follow-up activities.

After listening to the presentations of the experts during the last three days, I think I can say that we have no alternative but to keep these issues among the main priorities of our agenda. It will therefore be of great importance to continue and intensify our co-operation and exchange information, lessons learned, effective practices and know-how in the fields of combating soil degradation and of water management. My own country, which is confronting these challenges, is very interested in learning from the experience of others and in turn offers its knowledge to any countries that may be interested. The OSCE would be a suitable focal point for facilitating such exchanges.

There are various ways in which follow-up activities can be planned and organized for this 15th Economic and Environmental Forum. Some priority activities could take place very soon, in the second half of 2007, while others will need greater elaboration in order to meet the needs of the beneficiaries and to serve our common objectives.

I wish again to stress the importance of taking a long-term view when considering these problems and assuming undertakings, as the sole guarantee of success. We could achieve this objective through a thematic approach — for example, by taking up water, land or forests. However, another approach would be to divide the follow-up activities into the following categories:

In the first place, research, risk assessment, analyses and monitoring

As you know, an Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) assessment report for Eastern Europe was launched during this Forum. This type of study is a first step in the involvement of the OSCE in these matters, and it needs to be followed up by other activities and events aimed at dealing with the risks and challenges we have identified during these days.

The analysis of environmental problems in the Mediterranean region, together with subsequent follow-up activities, should also appear on our agenda.

I should like to express the appreciation of the Chairmanship for the active role that the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation have played during this Forum. Spain fully supports increasing our co-operation with them and, in particular, tackling the problems of soil degradation and water management.

I therefore appeal to the participating States and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation to identify practical ways of increasing our co-operation in these fields.

One of the main concerns that have been reiterated during this Forum concerns migrations flows caused by environmental factors. This is a subject which needs to be better understood and documented and on which research must be conducted. The OSCE could support and facilitate action in this area. As we learned from the discussions during the part of the Forum held in Vienna, the OSCE is at this moment considering a possible partnership

with the United Nations University to conduct studies on possible models concerning migrations that may in the future be caused by environmental factors. This study would concentrate on three countries in Central Asia and North Africa.

Secondly, the promotion of good governance

The Spanish Chairmanship appreciates and supports the proposal of the Russian Federation to organize a conference in Moscow, during the first half of October 2007, dealing with the role that the private sector can play in environmental protection and sustainable development, with special reference to co-operation between the public and private sectors. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development might be a natural partner in these efforts, together with large enterprises.

With regard to the sustainable management of forests and measures to counter the indiscriminate, illegal felling of trees, a first step might be the organization of capacity-building activities in the countries concerned, to be followed up subsequently by action at a regional level. The OSCE should continue consultations with partner organizations, particularly the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

Thirdly, the promotion of transboundary and regional co-operation

As the Chairman-in-Office announced in his opening statement to this Forum, the Spanish Chairmanship, in close co-operation with the Office of the Co-ordinator, is considering the holding of an event in Central Asia on co-operation in technology transfer relating to the efficient use of water. This proposal has received much support and was discussed yesterday evening during the side event devoted to Central Asia. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Central Asian delegations for their high level of representation, their active participation and their useful contributions.

The Chairmanship also welcomes the fact that the dialogue and co-operation between the OSCE and the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification are developing, and that preparations are being made for a joint activity. A technical seminar will be held which will serve as the beginning of a long-term initiative, the objective being the establishment of a regional centre for monitoring and management with regard to combating desertification in the Central Asian area. Spain supports this seminar and this co-operation.

As far as transboundary co-operation on water matters is concerned, the OSCE has already accumulated a great deal of experience through its activities on the Sava, Dniester, Chu-Talas and Kura-Araks rivers. This accumulated wisdom will be very useful in the development of activities on other transboundary watercourses. An example could be support for co-operation between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in relation to the Amu Darya river. We might also consider the convening of a regional seminar on co-operation in water management in Central Asia, potentially the first step in a longer-term initiative designed to lead to a regional co-operation and security agreement on dams.

I should like to thank Sweden for its announcement yesterday of a special event on co-operation in water matters. I wish to encourage other delegations to take similar initiatives in the future. I should likewise mention that the OSCE will participate in "World Water

Week”, being organized by the Swedish International Water Institute and to take place in August.

Fourthly and lastly, capacity-building activities

In this regard, mention should be made of the co-operation between the OSCE and UNECE in the framework of the project for training and co-operation in water matters, which will result in the OSCE participating, or rather assisting, in the organization of training seminars under its umbrella. We shall also discuss with UNECE the best way of strengthening our co-operation with the Interstate Commission for Water Co-ordination in Central Asia and with the Global Water Partnership.