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Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The Secretariat

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

Vienna, 21 November 2006

To: All OSCE Delegations
Partners for Co-operation
Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation

Subject: **69th Meeting of the Economic and Environmental
Sub-Committee of the Permanent Council
Item 5: Preliminary debriefing on the first Preparatory Conference held in
Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 16-17 November 2006**

Please find attached the Statement of Ambassador Sanchez de Boado, Head of the Spanish Permanent Representation for the OSCE 2007 Chairmanship, presented at the first Preparatory Conference for the 15th Economic and Environmental Forum "Land Degradation and Soil Contamination", Bishkek, 17 November 2006.

**STATEMENT
OF AMBASSADOR CARLOS SANCHEZ DE BOADO
HEAD OF THE SPANISH PERMANENT REPRESENTATION FOR THE
OSCE 2007 CHAIRMANSHIP**

**FIRST PREPARATORY CONFERENCE FOR THE
15TH ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM
“LAND DEGRADATION AND SOIL CONTAMINATION”**

**BISHKEK
17 NOVEMBER 2006**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Firstly let me express my deepest gratitude to the Kyrgyz's authorities for their warm welcoming. We were extremely honoured by the presence of his H.E. Mr. Felix Kulov, Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic and his H.E. Mr. Alikbek Djekshenkulov, Minister of Foreign Affairs. The attendance of such distinguished guests illustrates the relevance of our topics and the strong commitment of the Kyrgyz authorities as participating State of the OSCE to the launching of the 15th Economic and Environmental Forum.

I also want to acknowledge and congratulate the Coordinator, Bernard Snoy and his staff, and Ambassador Markus Muller and his team at the OSCE Centre in Bishkek, for their dedication and support that has contributed to a very successful conference.

I would also like to express our gratitude to the Belgian Chairmanship for its leadership of the OSCE this year, a task that Belgium has accomplished with great success.

Finally, I would like to thank the speakers, panelist, representatives of international organizations, government's representatives, civil society, and OSCE Field Presences for their motivating contributions.

During the last two days, we have successfully revisited the concept of environmental security, by linking security with environmental threats like land degradation, soil contamination, deforestation, watershed management, etc. These topics are no longer a matter of academic studies or theoretical conversations. Environmental problems are currently affecting the lives of common people causing health, economic, and migration problems, among others. An example is that land degradation and soil contamination are strongly related to the loss and shortages and/or mismanagement of vital resources (like water, soil and food). In the mid-term, it is likely that if this situation persists, it could lead to local and regional conflicts. The prevention of such conflicts demands active policies to eliminate or mitigate the environmental problems. Unfortunately, these problems transcend borders and can not be solved by one country acting alone. Therefore, cooperation is pivotal. Our work must attempt to counter these subjects by working together.

In fact, it is the OSCE's responsibility - as the largest regional security organization- to take leadership addressing them.

Now, allow me to describe briefly how the Participating States working together can help mitigate these problems that are beyond the reach of any one country working alone. As a result of this seminar, the incoming Spanish Chairmanship suggests the consideration of several general themes to the 15th Economic and Environmental Forum. Among which we can mention: environmental security, environmental governance, social effects of environmental problems, and environment and economic development.

We have seen how the mismanagement of the environment can lead to local/regional conflicts. Now, we should explore how, for example, the ENVSEC initiative can provide us with a tool to assess, monitor and prevent tensions over natural resources.

Our valuable speakers stressed that there is an urgent need to link environment and good governance. This was highlighted in a variety of fields including deforestation, bad agricultural practices, and environmental dangers of *mélange*, among others. All of these situations can lead to land degradation, soil contamination, water pollution, health problems, economic costs, and the loss of livelihoods. The OSCE and especially its field presences are well positioned to support the OSCE participating States in implementing good governance practices.

Environmentally induced migration could be a concern of the OSCE. It is now our task to examine the exact role the OSCE could play in raising awareness of this problem and in promoting cooperation to tackle it as soon as possible.

Finally, it is clear that environment and economic development play a key role in environmental security. The best businesses recognize that they can maximize their long term returns by minimizing their negative environmental impact. Through responsible action, businesses will become more competitive, not less. We look forward to the active involvement of the business community and the financial institutions, and encourage their assistance to OSCE participating States in developing sustainable business practices.

These themes, among other topics, can set the basis for our future work in the 15th Economic and Environmental Forum. At this point, I will like to announce that the

Second Preparatory conference in Zaragoza (Spain) will take place on 12 and 13 March, 2007.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me conclude by saying that most people will not measure the quality of their life based on wealth accumulation or opportunity, if they are living with environmental issues that make it impossible to satisfy basic needs of human beings, like food and health. In this vein, we can not expect our success to be measured by the number of documents or attendance at conferences such as this. It will be measured in terms of whether our children will have the opportunity to satisfy their basic needs. And here is where the OSCE can and must play an important role in advancing our common objective of strengthening cooperation, promoting economic development, and bringing about security in our common space. Thus, our success will be assessed on the successful development and implementation of your/our ideas and suggestions during these past two days. At the end of the day, the outcome will depend on the active commitment and support of the Participating States.

Ladies and gentlemen,

You, as experts, have presented us with some ideas for concrete ways of action and Spain looks forward to working with you into transforming some of these issues into practical and accessible solutions.

Of course, to see all opportunities and smart solutions that can be developed takes time, but innovation requires willingness to take the first step, this is what we have done here. I am confident that our work these past two days has set our subject in the right track

and paved the way for a positive and successful 15th Economic and Environmental Forum.

I thank you for your attention, and to finish and on behalf of all you, I want to express my most sincere thanks to the interpreters who have certainly done an outstanding job, and to the conference staff that have managed very efficiently to keep this facilities properly running throughout the entire conference.

THANK YOU.