

**HIGH LEVEL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE
INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR ACTION
“WATER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”, 2018-2028**

**“PROMOTING ACTION AND POLICY DIALOGUE ON WATER
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”
20-22 June 2018, Dushanbe, Tajikistan**

Plenary Session

Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities

Ambassador Vuk Žugić

Mr. Minister,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to address you today on the occasion of this important conference which aims to mobilise governments, international and regional organisations and all other stakeholders for the **International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”**, 2018 - 2028. I would like to congratulate the **President of the Republic of Tajikistan** and the Government of Tajikistan for taking global leadership and hosting this event.

The **OSCE Secretary-General Thomas Greminger** recently restated the importance of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda for international cooperation and for the OSCE. “The 2030 Agenda reinforces the nexus

between peace, security and development. This relationship is at the core of the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security", he said.

The links between peace, security and development are enshrined already in the founding document of the OSCE, the Helsinki Final Act from 1975. It laid the foundations of the OSCE's pioneering comprehensive security concept which considers not only hard security issues, but also economic and environmental issues, and the human dimension.

Ladies and gentlemen

Today we focus on the importance of water for sustainable development. As I mentioned, the Helsinki Final Act already refers to the "Prevention and control of water pollution, in particular of transboundary rivers and international lakes", as an important area of cooperation among OSCE participating States. This has later been followed by several OSCE Ministerial Council Declarations and Decisions, including the 2007 Madrid Ministerial Council Decision on water management.

Unfortunately, competition for water can be a **source of conflict** but joint water management can be a way to **prevent or resolve conflicts** and to **build confidence** among States.

Water connects people and countries in many ways. In the OSCE region alone, there are more than **150 river and lake basins that are shared by two or more countries**.

The OSCE has acquired considerable experience in promoting and facilitating transboundary water co-operation. Projects and different activities supported by the OSCE have contributed to more effective

governance of water resources, also articulating and materializing benefits of transboundary water co-operation for strengthening trust. I would like to highlight in particular the important role played by our **OSCE Field Operations** in this endeavour, including the **OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe**.

Allow me to emphasize concrete results arising out of this work by the OSCE. In South-Eastern Europe, we have been involved in the **International Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin** since its early stages

In the **Dniester basin**, shared by Moldova and Ukraine, the OSCE has supported the negotiation and ratification of a bilateral treaty which established the Commission for joint management of the Dniester river basin. Another outcome relates to the **Kura basin** in the South Caucasus, where the OSCE has been supporting Azerbaijan and Georgia in the drafting and negotiation of a similar bilateral treaty.

Here in Central Asia, we have been supporting co-operation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan within the framework of the **Chu-Talas basin**.

In these endeavours we are not acting alone. First and foremost we collaborate with our partners, different UN agencies and most of this collaboration happens within the framework of the **Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative** a partnership of the OSCE with UNDP, UN Environment, UNECE and REC since 2003.

Ladies and gentlemen

It is obvious that water diplomacy and water cooperation will become even more important in the future, due to the impacts of climate change and due to a growing world population, just to name few of the most important reasons.

We are ready to share our experience in the facilitation of water cooperation among participating States of the OSCE. Later today, we will be co-hosting, together with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), **the Action Panel on Transboundary Cooperation and Water Diplomacy.**

I am looking forward to fruitful discussions.

Thank you for your attention.