



OSCE High-Level Conference on Climate Change *Background Note*

OSCE and climate change – Political commitments:

The Helsinki Final Act is one of the first internationally agreed documents that integrates climate change. Already in 1975, it recognized climate phenomena as a common challenge and called on the OSCE participating States to co-operate for research on relevant areas. The 2003 OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension (MC.DOC/1/03) encouraged the OSCE participating States to ratify the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The 2007 Madrid Declaration on Environment and Security (MC.DOC/4/07) recognized climate change as a “*long-term challenge*”, referred to the United Nations climate process as the appropriate forum for negotiating global action on climate change, and defined a complementary role for the OSCE in addressing this challenge within its mandate and in its region. Later on, a few other OSCE political commitments referred to climate change in the context of migration (MC.DEC/5/09), energy (MC.DEC/6/09 and MC.DEC/5/13), and disaster risk reduction (MC.DEC/6/14).

On 3 December 2021, the OSCE Ministerial Council at its 28th meeting in Stockholm adopted a landmark decision “Strengthening Co-operation to Address the Challenges Caused by Climate Change” (MC.DEC/3/21). The Decision, amongst its other provisions, recognizes that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement are the primary international and intergovernmental mechanisms and fora for negotiating, developing and strengthening the global response to climate change. It reaffirms that the OSCE, as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, has a complementary role to play, within its mandate, in addressing the challenge of climate change within the OSCE area, notably by facilitating collective and co-operative responses. The decision also emphasizes that the effects of climate change can exacerbate economic challenges and environmental degradation, which may negatively affect prosperity, stability and security in the OSCE area. And it underlines that effective co-operation by the OSCE participating States in addressing the challenges caused by climate change and the promotion of early warning can be useful in building mutual confidence and promoting good neighbourly relations and thereby contributes to stability, resilience, and prosperity in the OSCE area. It encourages the OSCE participating States to intensify their dialogue and co-operation towards climate resilience, adaptation, and mitigation including through climate risk analysis, early warning, joint research & investment, and exchange of information and best practices in the area of technology & innovation. It also calls for promoting the effective participation of women in climate-related decision-making processes. The Decision tasks the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities and the OSCE field operations as well as other relevant OSCE Executive Structures to assist participating States in implementing the provisions of this decision, in co-operation with other relevant regional and international organizations.

OSCE and climate change - Highlights of action:

For more than a decade, OSCE structures have been nurturing co-operation in the field of climate change through facilitating political dialogue on climate change and its possible implications for security among the OSCE participating States and with the OSCE's Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. On the practical side, we develop and deliver projects together with our participating States in Central Asia, the South Caucasus, Eastern Europe, and South-Eastern Europe to assess and address potential security risks stemming from climate change.

Since 2020, the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) has been implementing the extra-budgetary funded project [Strengthening Responses to Security Risks from Climate Change in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia](#) in partnership with the Berlin-based think tank Adelphi and in close collaboration with OSCE Field Operations. The project aims to turn shared climate challenges into opportunities for co-operation and increase awareness and capacities for an integrated approach on climate change and security.

- So far, through this project and earlier OSCE initiatives, we have identified 42 hotspots with the involvement of hundreds of local stakeholders. Hotspots are shared areas that face multiple converging challenges, which include the impacts of climate change as well as compounding environmental, social, economic, and political pressures.
- We are now moving forward to identify and implement joint co-operation measures for climate resilience and adaptation in selected shared hotspots in South-Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the South Caucasus.
- We commissioned an independent expert analysis that assesses the impact of the ongoing war against Ukraine on climate security and climate action, and also provides recommendations for action in the short, medium and long-term.
- We engage with students and young professionals in Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe and provide training on climate change and security, laying the ground for regional networking on this topic that helps insure not only youth involvement but also holds promise for greater co-operation in the future.
- Enhancing awareness of and knowledge about linkages between gender issues and climate and security is among our priorities. Gender considerations are not only integrated within the framework of this project but these are also supported with practical initiatives.
- We launched climate change and security training that aims to connect practitioners from OSCE Field Operations and other Executive Structures and draws on the knowledge products generated by the project. This training provides the basis for sharing of experiences and best practices within and across regions.