



The close interlinkages between water and security are the central focus of the [23rd OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum](#), devoted to the theme "Water governance in the OSCE area – increasing security and stability through co-operation," which opened today in Prague.

OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Serbia's Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić said that "last year's devastating floods in the Western Balkans vividly demonstrated how important transboundary co-operation can be in addressing the negative impact of man-made and natural disasters." He stressed the need for greater political engagement, increased co-operation, and a better understanding of water governance and its complex connections with security.

"In the framework of our joint work plan with Switzerland, the Serbian Chairmanship focused specifically on the ways good water governance contributes to security and stability in the OSCE region. I am confident that this Forum will provide critical input for an OSCE Ministerial Council Decision in Belgrade later this year."

Swiss Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter stated that "the challenges and risks associated with water are indisputable. Water security is one of the major issues to address – for us and the generations that follow. This is why it is so important that we engage to transform water from a source of crisis into an instrument for peace." He added that "the OSCE has built a strong track record on supporting its participating States in fostering good and joint water governance. More can and should be done."

OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier stressed the importance of considering water as a strategic resource and a common good, which requires co-operation at all levels. "The deliberations during the [Forum's] preparatory meetings in [Vienna](#) and in [Belgrade](#) have advanced a deeper understanding of water governance and its relationship with sustainable development, climate change and disaster risk reduction, which are high on the global agenda this year."

The three-day Forum brings together representatives of OSCE participating States, civil society, international organizations, business and academia. The discussions will pave the way for further deliberations in the run-up to the 2015 OSCE Ministerial Council.

*Photo by:OSCE* 