

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Vladimir Chizhov,
Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the EU
at the International Donors' Conference for people affected by the flood
in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia
(Brussels, 16 July 2014)**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Russia was aggrieved at the loss of lives and devastation caused by the deadly floods in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. We offer our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families of the victims as well as our deep sympathy to all whose lives were afflicted by these tragic events.

Russian emergency rescue teams were the first to react to calls for help and mounted a significant effort to assist in relief operations. In the second half of May Russian EMERCOM agency evacuated more than 3 thousand people from affected regions in Serbia, including over 600 children. 140 tons of humanitarian supplies were airlifted to Serbia and some 40 tons to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Preparations for another airlift are currently underway.

The Russian public and business community immediately stepped in with voluntary donations of money, clothing and equipment. The Russian Orthodox Church alone contributed some 580 thousand Euros. Another 600 thousand Euros in relief aid were delivered by a major oil company “Naftna Industrija Srbije”, a subsidiary of “Gazprom Neft”.

The recent floods highlighted once again the key role of the Russian-Serbian Humanitarian Centre, based in the city of Niš. This bilateral mechanism enabled swift response to natural and man-made disasters across the Balkans region and helped save countless human lives. Russia is contributing 30,5 Mln. Euros to the International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO) in support of the Centre's activities in 2013-2016. We believe that in future the Centre could become an efficient international instrument of multilateral cooperation in the region.

In view of the displacement of anti-personnel minefields in Bosnia and Herzegovina caused by the flooding, let me emphasize the Centre's capabilities in terms of mine clearing. Since 2008 Russian minesweepers have cleared over 4 Mln. sq. metres of land and defused over 12 thousand explosive devices in Serbia, including unexploded ordnance left behind by the 1999 NATO bombing campaign. Russia has allocated 16,67 Mln. Euros to the ICDO for demining operations in the region for 2013-2015.

Finally, as we have just witnessed from the impressive documentary films, the extent of damage to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia is indeed immense and will take months, even years to overcome. With this in mind my country intends to give an in-depth consideration to the respective Recovery Needs Assessment reports with a view to swiftly engaging in various reconstruction projects in the region.

Thank you.