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Delegation of Belarus to the OSCE

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ALYAKSANDR SYCHOV,
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TO THE OSCE, AT THE FOURTEENTH MEETING OF THE
OSCE ECONOMIC FORUM**

Prague, 22 May 2006

Plenary Session: Opening

Mr. Chairman,

Today's meeting provides an excellent opportunity to exchange experience and best practices with regard to transport, to co-ordinate our joint activities and to attempt to define the specific role of the OSCE in dealing with transport problems.

The Republic of Belarus attaches great importance to the development of co-operation in the economic and environmental dimension of the OSCE.

We supported the selection of transport as the theme of the 2006 Economic Forum. Indeed, transport is of vital importance for trade and economic development, stability and security, as demonstrated by the results of the preparatory conferences and also by the first part of the Economic Forum held in Vienna in January.

The transport system of the Republic of Belarus, as a vital element in the industrial and social infrastructure and in general meeting consumer demand for transportation services, accounts for a significant share of the gross national product (GNP); in fact, transport services make up 8 per cent of the country's GNP.

Within the international transport system Belarus has projected itself in recent years as a country with extensive possibilities for the transit of people, freight and vehicles.

People and freight are transported across Belarus on international transport corridors II and IX. However, at the present stage of development the transport system in the Republic of Belarus is not yet completely in line with the European transport system in terms of equipment, technology and organization. Work is continuing in this regard to improve transport communications and information systems, border crossing points and roadside services in terms of facilities and consumer services for transporters.

We were very interested to take note of the basic conclusions and recommendations of the first part of the Economic Forum. We believe that the OSCE could also play its part in

increasing regional economic co-operation and strengthening stability. In this respect, the OSCE should pay particular attention to political support for extending the pan-European transport corridor to the east and advancing the Asian transport system to the west.

The Republic of Belarus, which has common borders with both the European Union and Russia and is a member of the Eurasian Economic Community, has a direct interest in the development of transport corridors.

At the same time, Belarus has no access to the sea, which inevitably causes certain difficulties with regard to trade and economic development. The problem of landlocked countries was discussed in sufficient detail at the meeting in January. We hope that the recommendations coming out of these discussions will be analysed carefully and that the OSCE will use its political weight to foster the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and to guide the dialogue between interested States and organizations.

As was rightly pointed out in the document of the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, the resolution of transport problems demands both a technical approach and political will.

In the light of terrorist threats and environmental and technological risks, the development of transport networks and transport security needs to be considered in all its various ramifications and in an interdisciplinary fashion.

The OSCE is called upon to adopt a systematic and comprehensive approach of this kind, making rational use of its resources with account taken of the documents and decisions that have been adopted.

In this connection, mention should be made of the OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension adopted in Maastricht in 2003. In our opinion, there is currently a need for additional efforts by the participating States and the OSCE to ensure its successful and comprehensive implementation. The work of the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities and the relevant projects by the OSCE field offices will be of special significance in that regard.

Our delegation supports the proposal by Spain regarding the theme for the Fifteenth Economic Forum. We believe that the problem of environmental security and sustainable development is multifaceted and of key significance both for economic development and for establishing co-operation and mutual understanding between OSCE participating States.

In conclusion, I should like to congratulate the Belgian Chairmanship, the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic for their excellent organization of this Forum.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.