



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

**Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic
and Environmental Activities**

Helsinki, 10 September 2007

**First Preparatory Conference
to the 16th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum**

**“Maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the OSCE area: Increasing security
and protecting the environment”**

Helsinki, 10-11 September 2007

WELCOMING REMARKS

**by Mr. Bernard Snoy
Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me join the previous speakers and welcome you all, on behalf of the OSCE Secretariat, to this first preparatory Conference to the 16th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum.

Allow me first to thank Ambassador Aleksi Härkönen and Ambassador Antti Turunen and their able teams in Helsinki and Vienna for the excellent co-operation in preparing this Conference. My colleagues and I are looking very much forward to continuing this co-operation and to closely working with the incoming Finnish Chairmanship of the OSCE towards making the 16th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum a genuine success.

Now, in Helsinki, our main objective is to identify the most realistic and suitable recommendations for the future OSCE engagement in the area of maritime and inland waterways co-operation, in view of increasing security and protecting the environment in our region. In order to succeed, we need over the next days an interactive and dynamic exchange of views. We need to learn more about what is already being done and about what is still needed. I want to use this opportunity and warmly thank our speakers for accepting our invitation and for being here with us today to share their expert knowledge and to make recommendations. I encourage all the participants to engage the speakers in an open and action oriented debate.

I warmly welcome in Helsinki the Economic and Environmental Officers from the OSCE field presences. We rely very much on their expertise and knowledge. They have always played an important part during the Economic and Environmental Forum process, during our deliberations but also in implementing concrete follow-up activities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Embarking in such a complex process as the preparations for the Forum, having to address a new theme, is always challenging. In doing so, we are, each year, guided by our mandate. The theme of the 16th Forum - "Maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the OSCE area: Increasing security and protecting the environment" will also be approached from the perspective of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security. Our discussions should focus on the specific areas where the OSCE, as a political security organization, can provide added value.

When we start preparing a new Forum, we should also try to build upon our existing experience. The theme of the 16th Forum not only draws on a number of OSCE commitments included in the OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension, adopted by the Ministerial Council in Maastricht in 2003, but provides for useful linkages with the topics of previous OSCE Economic and Environmental Forums and follow-up activities that were subsequently developed. In 2006 under the Belgian Chairmanship we focused on transport development and transport security and this year, under the Spanish Chairmanship, we dealt with environmental security and sustainable development. The recommendations of these two Forums will be instrumental in shaping the way ahead over the next year's process too. Let me also mention the Workshop on Transport, Security and Environment organized in Tonsberg, with the support of Norway, on 16-18 October 2006.

In order to facilitate the discussions my Office and the incoming Finnish Chairmanship have prepared and circulated an annotated agenda (which includes some illustrative questions that could be addressed during the discussion in every session, but which are, by no means, exhaustive) as well as a concept paper (which provides some background and factual information, defines the policy context, the scope and objectives of the Helsinki Conference). I encourage you to have a close look at these two documents and I hope you will find them useful.

After the opening session we will proceed immediately with Session I, which will set the general framework for the Conference's debates by exploring various maritime and inland waterways co-operation frameworks and relevant international norms and standards, such as those developed by IMO and UNECE. We should see how the OSCE, as a political organization, can contribute to their dissemination and implementation.

Later on we will focus on the Northern European area. HELCOM, the European Commission and the Russian Federation will present the existing co-operation mechanisms and initiatives in this region as well as the gaps and challenges. Thus, by analyzing the current status of affairs in the region, possible ways forward would be identified. Session II is also expected to provide insights on how the Northern European experience could be utilized and adapted in other OSCE regions.

After the lunch break we will continue with two thematic sessions. Session III will address cooperation issues related to transport security. Various best practices and co-operation mechanisms will be presented. Session IV will focus on environmental protection and will discuss a number of environmental challenges such as those posed by the transport of hazardous goods, maritime pollution, accidents, ballast water etc. Prevention and emergency response preparedness are the two key words of this session. These sessions will aim at identifying the ways in which the OSCE could promote effective practices across its region and contribute to strengthening co-operation at various levels.

Tomorrow morning we will start by highlighting the regional experiences from the Black Sea basin, in particular with regard to maritime transport, port operations and maritime transport safety and security. The overall objective of the session would be to identify the remaining gaps and challenges and the role the OSCE can play in addressing them and in strengthening co-operation in the region.

Session VI will focus on various aspects related to inland waterways and rivers, particularly in a transboundary context. Both security and environmental aspects will play a central role in this session. Various existing experiences, *inter alia* the OSCE/UNECE's Dniester project and the recently launched ENVSEC-Amu-Darya assessment project will be highlighted.

In session VII representatives of international organizations, civil society, the business community and governments are expected to present their views on the issues addressed by the conference and focus on how they see the requirement for co-operation between different actors in addressing the existing challenges related to maritime and inland waterways co-operation to enhance security and protect the environment. This session is expected to define the role of the OSCE in offering a platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue and co-operation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Conference in Helsinki is an important milestone in the preparatory process for the 16th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum. The results of the Conference will be further discussed in Vienna, in the Economic and Environmental Committee, and during the first session of the Forum on 28-29 January 2008.

I am looking forward to a productive and rewarding exchange of views.

I thank you for your attention.