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**Keynote Speech  
by**

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Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island  
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**at the**

**16th Meeting of the OSCE Economic  
and Environmental Forum, Maritime and Inland Waterways  
Cooperation in the OSCE area;  
Increasing Security and Protecting the Environment**

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Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I address the 16th Meeting of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum. I am particularly pleased to see that the OSCE Members and Partners are very firm in their commitment to accord special attention to the development challenges faced by landlocked countries in Central Asia and Caucasus region, member states of this body as well as its partner landlocked developing countries. OSCE plays an important role in mobilizing the political will and commitment of its participating states to address security, economic and environmental issues in relation to maritime and inland waterways cooperation. Let me also take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the Government of Czech Republic for its gracious hospitality extended to us since our arrival in this beautiful city.

The Almaty Programme of Action, adopted in 2003, recognized that landlocked developing countries are faced with tremendous development obstacles related to their lack of access to the sea, and addresses the need for integrated trade and infrastructural initiatives in assisting these countries in their economic and social development. However, recent studies show that the progress to overcome both physical and non-physical bottlenecks is slow. In the Doing Business report 2008, one can find eight landlocked developing countries among the ten bottom performers on trade facilitation related indicators; most of them are in Central Asia. The difficult trading climate can largely be explained by the long distances from the nearest sea ports and cumbersome border crossing procedures. We must not forget the economic and social dimension of the issue.

As several countries in the OSCE area face the challenging consequences of being landlocked in their efforts to integrate into the world economy and expansion of regional trade, the theme of this Economic Forum to discuss ways and means to enhance cooperation and facilitate a better access to the open sea of the Landlocked Countries, is particularly relevant. It is important to note that, in spite of the potential advantages of inter-modal transport, its success cannot be taken for granted. Compared to freight transport by road, rail and inland waterways, traffic is slower and requires complex multi-modal solutions. Therefore, the latter two modes will be used less frequently unless improved infrastructure and structural reforms make inter-modal transport more attractive. Regional and international cooperation is the key to developing more efficient maritime and inland waterways, and to overcoming the geographical disadvantage of landlocked developing countries. In a region with many shared water resources, cooperation is particularly crucial for establishing viable inland waterway, protecting the environment, and avoiding regional disputes and conflicts. Europe offers excellent examples and best practices in this regard. The nearest example is the “Joint statement on the Guiding Principles on the Development of Inland Navigation and Environment in the Dunabe River Basin” that you examined at your meeting in January. It is a far-reaching initiative linking environmental sustainable inland navigation with maintenance of existing waterways and the development of future waterway infrastructure. I hope this initiative would inspire the Central Asian region to develop similar agreements over

shared water resources such as the Amu Darya River Basin (shared by Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) and the Syr Darya River (shared between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan). The tremendous prospect offered by these basins should be fully utilized to improve cooperation and coordination in a joint strategy to combat the underlying challenges of shared water resources in the region.

It should be also taken into account that the Central Asian Region has tremendous potential as a transit region itself, linking Europe with China and the East. The fast-developing countries to the east and south are interested in promoting their trade with this vast region and use their transit corridors, as a short cut, to the European markets. Central Asia could and is emerging as an important corridor for European and Asian trade links. Inclusive broad based regional cooperation is essential for establishing efficient transit systems in Central Asia and Caucasus. These issues have been highlighted in the outcome document adopted at the recent Regional Review Meeting of Asia and Europe which was convened jointly last month by my Office, UNECE and UNESCAP in Bangkok as part of the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action.

Within the Almaty Programme of Action, the donor community, UN system organizations are making efforts to promote international cooperation aimed at establishing viable transport networks to better integrate landlocked states to the international trade. Since adoption of the Almaty Programme of Action five years ago, enormous momentum has been generated and tangible progress has been registered. ODA to landlocked developing countries is steadily increasing; its share for infrastructure development is on the rise; far-reaching trade facilitation measures are being implemented. Thanks to bold policy reforms and cooperative arrangements undertaken by both landlocked and transit developing countries, delays in transit traffic are being significantly reduced. According to our computing based on the World Bank data, on average, landlocked developing countries, as a group, spent 49 days for export in 2007 down from 57 days in 2005. Time spent for importing went down to 56 days from 72 for the same period. These are welcome developments. But much remains to be done. I believe, the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action, that is being convened on 2 and 3 October 2008 at the Headquarters of the United Nations would further boost international commitments and cooperation for the accelerated implementation of the Almaty Programme for the remainder of the decade.

In conclusion, let me reiterate the commitment of the UN Office of the High Representative for LDCs , LLDCs and SIDS to the global partnerships aimed at assisting landlocked developing countries in their efforts to seize the opportunities offered by the rule based trading system. OSCE is a very important partner and stakeholder for this noble endeavour. I am fully committed to the close cooperation that exists between the UN-OHRLS and the OSCE, as called for in the latter's Council decision 11/06.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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