



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**  
**The Secretariat**

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

**Prague, 23 May 2005**

**THIRTEENTH MEETING OF THE OSCE ECONOMIC FORUM**  
**“DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS, MIGRATION AND INTEGRATING**  
**PERSONS BELONGING TO NATIONAL MINORITIES:**  
**ENSURING SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE**  
**DEVELOPMENT IN THE OSCE AREA”**

**Welcoming remarks by the**  
**Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities**

Distinguished Chairperson,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Commissioner Špidla,  
Distinguished Ms. Süßmuth,  
Distinguished Ambassadors,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to welcome all of you to the Thirteenth Economic Forum. First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of the Czech Republic, and in particular to Foreign Minister Svoboda, for hosting this year's meeting. I also extend my appreciation to the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Ms. Brigita Schmögnerová, and her staff for the contribution to our work in particular with regard to the session on the review of commitments. I would also like to thank the International Organization for Migration represented here by Director General Brunson McKinley for their valuable input to the preparations to this year's Forum. My appreciation also goes to the group of experts convened by the Slovenian chairmanship that co-operated with my office in preparing the three preparatory seminars and the Economic Forum. The same gratitude goes to my colleagues from the HCNM and the ODIHR, as well as to our distinguished keynote speakers.

I have noticed with great pleasure that many representatives from the private sector, academia and numerous NGOs are present. Given that public-private dialogue and partnership are key to successful economic development, I am looking forward to your active participation in our deliberations. I am also very pleased about the presence of numerous representatives of international organizations. I am also delighted to welcome the representatives from our OSCE field presences, heads of missions, and our economic and environmental officers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The three preparatory seminars held in the run-up to this year's Forum highlighted the relevance of the chosen theme of this year's Economic Forum, "Demographic Trends, Migration and Integrating Persons belonging to National Minorities". These are issues which affect people everywhere in the OSCE area.

At our first Preparatory Seminar held in Trieste in November 2004, we heard about some dramatic forecasts regarding future population developments in the OSCE area. A serious drop in fertility rates, a shrinking population and labour force, as well as ageing populations in many countries raise questions about the sustainability of pension funds, financial markets and innovative spirit. But we also heard about a number of possible remedies to the expected trends. The OSCE was called upon to play a more active role in the fight against demographic decline in the industrial and post-industrial world. Although one can see scope for the OSCE's involvement in this area, this can only happen in co-operation with other international organizations, NGOs, research institutes and the governments of the States concerned.

At the second Preparatory Seminar, which was held in Almaty on 24 and 25 January 2005, experts and partner organizations took a very close look at "Migration from an economic, environmental and security perspective".

The discussions centred on the economic aspects which are the key driving factor of migratory movements. It is important to underline that migration is only a second-best answer to the problem of poverty and lack of economic opportunities in the countries of origin. The best answer is always to provide adequate economic opportunities at home. Nevertheless, migration could and should be a win-win activity. Countries of destination gain labour ready to perform jobs at lower cost, while countries of origin benefit from remittances and investment. One of the key problems in this respect, however, resides in the fact that the demand for migration, not to mention the supply, is often higher than the legal channels available for migration. This discrepancy is one of the reasons behind the staggering numbers of irregular migrants.

3.5 million in the US, 5 million in Russia, according to official estimates. There are estimates that the recent Spanish legislation granting "amnesty" for illegal immigrants may lead to the legalization of about one million foreign employees.

Therefore, the security and human rights implications of such huge numbers of irregular migrants cannot be ignored in our deliberations.

Migration pressures will continue to persist, as the almost daily pictures from the Mediterranean testify. For political, humanitarian, security as well as for economic reasons, legal migration is of course preferred, since it ensures contributions to tax revenues, contributions to insurance funds and prevents unfair competition for jobs. Restrictions on immigration that do not correspond to labour demand contribute indirectly to illegal immigration and the formation of an informal sector. These may in turn facilitate trafficking in human beings and other illegal activities that were topics of past Economic Forums.

In this context, several old and new, sometimes very innovative, schemes and policy measures were discussed. This is an area in which the OSCE can become active by providing a platform on which to share, discuss and promote solutions of managed migration that work. It is of utmost importance for many countries to develop adequate policies of managed migration. I would like to thank the delegations that provided an answer to my request for an update on policy solutions.

At the third Preparatory Seminar on “Integration of national minorities” held in Kiev, the representative of the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities proposed to prepare an OSCE “Statement of Principles” on the integration of persons belonging to national minorities, with guidance on economic and social aspects of integration. I suggest that the Forum consider this initiative. The seminar has also brought many ideas on how to integrate persons belonging to national minorities while preserving their national and cultural identity. Integration should not be confused with assimilation.

Among other important issues that emerged during our seminars and the ODIHR seminar is the role of public awareness with regard to migration and the integration of minorities. One of the factors that make implementation of legal instruments corresponding to the needs of economy so difficult is public resistance based often on misconception of the role of migrants. Just to quote one example, a recent article in *The Economist* refers to a study showing that readers of British tabloid press estimated the number of immigrants to be three times higher than the actual numbers, while readers of more centre-of-the-road papers gave much more reasonable figures. Another study presented in Kiev at the preparatory Seminar noted that the crime rate among immigrants in one of the European countries is comparable to the crime rate among natives if the same age groups are compared. Popular ideas on this matter are usually different.

Among the many suggestions of the preparatory seminars for this Forum was the need to improve the awareness of the public in the countries of destination about the benefits of migration. It was recommended that public awareness programmes should be promoted to reduce xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance towards migrants. On the other hand there is a need to make adequate and realistic information available to potential migrants about legal and labour regulations, job availability, cultural conditions and so on in destination countries. It was suggested that such services could, for example, be provided through information centres in the home country or through embassies and consulates in the destination countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Preparatory Seminars have not been the only OSCE events dealing with migration this year. As you are aware, ODIHR organized the Human Dimension Seminar on Migration and Integration in Warsaw from 11 to 13 May 2005, looking at the issue from the angle of human rights. Only close co-operation between both dimensions can deliver tangible results.

The three Preparatory Seminars analysed in depth how OSCE participating States and the OSCE can contribute to dealing with issues related to demographic trends, migration and integrating persons belonging to national minorities. The conclusions and suggestions of the Preparatory Seminars were instrumental in identifying a number of priority issues and possible activities. The discussion of this year’s Economic Forum will once more be

structured around these priority issues and further clarify how participating States and the OSCE can proceed in these areas of activities.

I hope that within the framework of our discussions over the coming days, we can look at these proposals again and make them more concrete — not least by taking into account the experience that the OSCE has already acquired in this area, as well as that of its partner organizations.

Let me now say a few things about the structure of this year's Forum.

Tomorrow, the Review Session of the Commitments of OSCE participating States, which has been extended to an entire day for the first time, will focus on commitments in the area of Integration, Trade and Transport. The Background Report for this session has been prepared by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and will be commented upon by the United Nations Development Programme, with contributions being made by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) on their findings.

OSCE participating States also filled in a questionnaire on their commitments, which will be part of tomorrow's discussions.

The side events of the Forum will look at the following matters: migration and economic development in OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, where demographic trends that are opposite to those dominating in Europe also contribute to migration pressures; the implementation of the Roma and Sinti Action Plan — affecting what is possibly the most excluded minority in the OSCE region; the OCEEA Anti-Trafficking Programme on Public-Private Co-operation in the Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings, and the Labour Migration Project implemented by the OSCE Office in Yerevan in co-operation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Issues of the Republic of Armenia. You can find the exact locations and times of the side events in the agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the Chairperson already mentioned, this is my fourth Economic Forum and my final one as I will quit my position as Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities at the end of next month.

I would like to thank the Portuguese, Dutch, Bulgarian and Slovenian Chairmanships as well as other delegations and Secretary General Ján Kubiš for their friendly and wise guidance and co-operation. Thanks to the will of participating States, the Economic and Environmental Dimension has made real progress in contributing to comprehensive security in the last four years.

At this point, I would like to reflect on a number of developments that I have witnessed over the last four years in our dimension.

It has become a normal practice that each Economic Forum is now followed by projects in relevant areas. Yet, as you know, projects and activities are a relatively recent addition to OSCE's economic and environmental dimension. What is more, only a few years ago, even the term "programmatic activity" would have almost been anathema in this area. Since then, however, two multi-year programmes, the ENVSEC and Anti-Trafficking

Programme, have been developed by the OCEEA in co-operation with field missions and partner organizations.

Several other projects for promoting good governance, empowering vulnerable groups, fighting money-laundering, and facilitating environmental co-operation and education, and many others have also been launched and successfully implemented by my Office and OSCE field missions, transforming the approach the OSCE has taken in the second dimension. In many areas, such as the environment, but also with regard to the fight against corruption or combating money-laundering and the financing of terrorism, the OSCE is now considered a serious international player.

The Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension, which was adopted at the Maastricht Ministerial Council in 2003, and regular meetings of the Economic and Environmental Subcommittee have provided additional guidance for the development of activities in my Office. The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with the colleagues from UNECE will allow us to further deepen our co-operation and thus enhance the complementarity of our two organizations.

Once again, thank you, Boris, for your kind words. I wish all of you a successful Economic Forum and useful follow-up activities.

Thank you for your attention.