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## Opening statement

by Dr. Teija Tiilikainen, State Secretary (Political), Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland  
at the First Preparatory Conference to the Sixteenth OSCE Economic and Environmental  
Forum: "Maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the OSCE area: Increasing security  
and protecting the environment"

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you warmly to the first event arranged by the incoming Finnish OSCE Chairmanship of 2008 together with the OSCE Secretariat. I hope that this first Preparatory Conference to the Sixteenth OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum is also a good way to support Spain in its Chairmanship in 2007.

The particular topic of the Conference "Maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the OSCE area: increasing security and protecting the environment" which Finland has proposed, is important for us - as it is important for many other countries.

From our point of view, strengthening security and safety of water transport requests urgent measures. Increasing cooperation for more secure water transport is therefore a must. I am happy that all OSCE participating States gave their consent to this topic.

The Baltic Sea is a telling example of the challenges that we face today. In particular the volume of energy transport is growing considerably. Also the amount of goods and the number of people transported are increasing. The sheer volume of transport has an unquestionable impact on the environment. An accident could in the worst case cause unthinkable damage in our narrow and shallow waterways.

About 85 million people live in the Baltic Sea catchment area. In the programme of the Finnish government the Baltic Sea and the protection of watercourses is emphasized. Efficient regional cooperation is a key to saving the Baltic Sea.

Finland pays particular attention to various regional and sub-regional cooperation networks and partnerships. All the coastal states around the Baltic Sea have been working together to protect the Baltic marine environment from all sources of pollution for already three decades through Helsinki Commission (HELCOM). HELCOM is the governing body of the "Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area" – more usually known as the Helsinki Convention. For the first time ever, all the sources of pollution around an entire sea were made subject to a single convention, signed in 1974 by the then seven Baltic coastal states. The 1974 Convention entered into force on 3 May 1980. The European Community – the first pillar of the European Union- brings its important contribution to the common effort. The work needs to be continued and developed further.

Another important forum for environmental cooperation in the Baltic Sea context is formed by the Northern Dimension. It is a common policy between the EU, Russian Federation, Norway and Iceland. The objectives of this cooperation are to strengthen stability, well-being and sustainable development in Northern Europe and to develop cooperation with Russia. The Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership has the Baltic Sea environment as one of its focal areas.

Finland is also an active member of the four northern regional councils, the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Arctic Council. All of these have different memberships, but they all have an important role in promoting cooperation and sustainable development in Northern Europe and the Arctic. Finland holds the Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2007. Finland also acts as the Chair of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council until November 2007.

One of the most pressing global challenges that stress the interdependence of people and nations is climate change. The Finnish government will tackle the issue by drawing up a long-term climate and energy strategy. This highlights the need for improving coordination and balancing of ecological and economic considerations in decision-making. Part of the effort is the promotion of environmental technology.

Economic and environmental matters are an important part of the OSCE agenda, underlining the Organization's comprehensive approach to security. In its Chairmanship programme Finland will pay due attention to the Economic and Environmental Dimension along with the Politico-Military and the Human Dimension.

The so called broad concept of security forms the starting point for the security policy white book that the Finnish government is currently preparing and which will formulate the guidelines for Finland's security and defence policy for the coming years. There are a multitude of dimensions in such a broad concept of which you are here focusing on one. Your expertise and deliberations are valuable also for us when we will try to cope with all important dimensions of broad security in this new white book. Of course, all the other pillars of our OSCE Chairmanship are equally valuable in this respect.

With these words I would like to thank you for coming to Finland and for giving your contribution to this important Conference. I wish you a very pleasant and stimulating Conference.

I thank you for your attention.