

**The 16th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum (Part 2),
Prague, 19 - 21 May 2008**

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

**Concluding remarks by
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Head of the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship Task Force**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

It is my great pleasure to make some concluding remarks concerning the 16th Economic and Environmental Forum.

During the Forum process we have addressed the topic of maritime and inland waterways co-operation from the security and environmental perspective. We started in Helsinki last September with a special focus on experiences of the Northern Europe and the Black Sea as well as on co-operation on transboundary water courses and rivers. In January we deepened our discussions on the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea and on transboundary watercourses and rivers in Vienna.

In Ashgabat in March we concentrated on the Caspian Sea and the Mediterranean as well as on the challenges faced by the landlocked countries. We took advantage of the excellent opportunity to examine the theme from a Central Asian perspective. During the past three days we have benefited from the earlier deliberations and drawn some conclusions on the role of the OSCE in maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the entire OSCE region.

A number of suggestions and recommendations have emerged from the Forum process. The need to strengthen co-operation between participating States and International Organizations in order to ensure an integrated approach has been underlined. Similarly, the importance of involving all stakeholders including the private sector and civil society organizations has been stressed.

The OSCE should continue to cooperate with the relevant international organizations, like the IMO and the UNECE, by bringing added value with its comprehensive approach to security. The role of the OSCE to promote a policy debate and advocate an early ratification and an effective implementation of relevant conventions has been acknowledged. Also the OSCE's wide network of Field Presences can be used to conduct project activities together with other organizations including training and other forms of capacity building.

The importance of regional and inter-regional co-operation has been strongly emphasized. As to maritime co-operation, there are already many regional mechanisms in place. The discussions during the Forum process have shown that we can learn from each other and benefit from best practises of other regions. Strengthening regional maritime co-operation would benefit all the parties concerned. For example, oil preparedness and response to combat oil accidents as well as combating other environmental threats are areas where regional co-operation could be strengthened and where training initiatives have already been developed. Please take another look at our posters when leaving this conference hall. They depict a situation that we all would like to avoid.

The OSCE could further develop its co-operation with the IMO for example by signing a memorandum of understanding following the model of the memorandum of understanding signed with the UNECE. This idea should be discussed in the Economic and Environmental Committee.

As to inland waterways, regional and transboundary water co-operation is also crucial. It would be useful to develop further activities and projects. In some cases the issues of waterways co-operation should be developed together with the management of water resources. In conflict areas waterways co-operation can serve as a further confidence-building measure.

We have had an eye-opening discussion of the challenges of the landlocked countries, especially in Central Asia. The OSCE should support the enhancement of regional co-operation towards efficient multimodal transport corridors. In this connection it has been emphasized that customs co-operation and border crossing facilitation should be supported by the OSCE.

Climate change has come up in many interventions. It is increasingly regarded as a major environmental challenge with serious security implications. The OSCE should continue addressing this issue bearing in mind the comprehensive security concept of our Organization.

We have now come to the final stage of the 16th Economic and Environmental Forum. However, we have some follow-up activities in the pipeline. A conference on 'Safety of Navigation and Environmental Security in a Transboundary Context in the Black Sea Basin' will be held in Odessa on 24-26 June. This is an excellent example of regional co-operation. In addition, later in the autumn the OSCE Mission in Georgia will arrange a workshop to deal with oil-spill preparedness in co-operation with the Georgian authorities.

If other participating States agree we will prepare a decision for the Ministerial Council in Helsinki on the basis of the recommendations of the 16th Forum, taking also into account the need to constantly update the Forum process and clarify the focus in the economic and environmental activities in general.

I would like to thank all participants for their active involvement in the deliberations. I would especially like to thank the speakers for their high-quality presentations and the moderators for steering and stimulating the discussion so professionally. In addition, I am grateful to the rapporteurs for their valuable contribution, which will enable us to prepare a comprehensive written report of the discussions.

And of course I would like to thank Mr Snoy and his team as well as the Prague Office for the excellent co-operation in preparing and conducting the second part of the Forum. I would also like to thank our Czech hosts for their generous hospitality.

Finally, the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship is looking forward to the 17th Economic and Environmental Forum and wishes the incoming Greek Chairmanship every success in tackling the issue of migration governance, and hope that the participating States will support the endeavour of our Greek friends.

On a personal note, I would like to recall that we certainly seemed to surprise many with our theme at first. I would like to thank those delegations, which helped us to develop it further and contributed to it in a tangible way. I am aware that some delegations never saw this theme as a priority, and would like to thank them for the constructive attitude they showed. As to whether we had some regrets I would like to quote Frank Sinatra and say that they were too few to mention.

Thank you.