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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND FORESTRY OF THE
REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN, AT THE FOURTEENTH MEETING
OF THE OSCE ECONOMIC FORUM**

Prague, 22 to 24 May 2006

**Transport development and the environment in the
Republic of Tajikistan**

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan to express our sincere gratitude to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe for the invitation to this meeting and to the OSCE Centre in Dushanbe in particular for helping us to participate in the work of the Fourteenth Meeting of the OSCE Economic Forum to examine transport development with a view to enhancing regional economic co-operation and stability and its impact on the environment.

Regional and international environmental co-operation is one of the main focuses of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, increasing the effectiveness of many decisions adopted and helping in the implementation of practical measures to improve the state of the environment in our country and in the region.

As you are aware, the Republic of Tajikistan played an active role in the preparation of the international conference held in Dushanbe on 7 and 8 November 2005, and representatives from Tajikistan also took part in the first stage of the Forum in Vienna in January of this year. This once again confirms Tajikistan's desire to support an international policy of development and to create favourable conditions for its implementation in our country and in the region.

Distinguished Participants,

Over the last few years, our country has drafted and approved a number of programmes and regulatory instruments concerning the environment, in particular regarding protection of the atmosphere and transport development:

— Environmental Protection Act (1993);

- Traffic Act (1995);
- Protection of the Atmosphere Act (1996);
- Transport Act (2000).

These laws determine the State policy on environmental protection and support for the development of the transport sector. Particular attention is paid to the elaboration of an appropriate transport control system. As a legal basis, the aforementioned laws create favourable opportunities for investment in the transport sector and for international co-operation.

Over a short period of time, Tajikistan has changed from an area without roads into a country with a modern transport system; it has progressed from mountain paths and caravan routes to highways and airways.

Transport in the Republic of Tajikistan is essential to its economic development. In view of Tajikistan's geographical location, passengers and freight are largely transported by road.

Let me give you a few facts about the state of road transport.

The average "age" of motor vehicles is almost "pensionable", namely 10 to 15 years.

Only 40 per cent of the heavy goods vehicles are in good working order and the running costs are high.

More than 80 per cent of vehicles should be taken off the road.

More than 84 per cent of all freight and 68.4 per cent of passengers are transported by road.

It is evident that the aging fleet of motor vehicles, the shortcomings of the country's transport policy in terms of regulating fuel quality and the eco-friendliness of transport, and ineffective inspection and maintenance works increase the negative impact of transport on the environment.

Bearing in mind that there are three major transport transit corridors in the Republic of Tajikistan that are part of the Asian Highway Network, namely the AH7, AH65 and AH66 international highways, a logical question arises: to what extent will this further increase the negative impact of transportation on the environment, given the fact that for the following reasons road transport will remain the main form of transportation.

Although rail transport in Tajikistan is also a strategic form of transportation by means of which virtually all international freight is transported, the Republic's railway system requires considerable investment for repair and renewal, particularly with a view to extending it to ports in India.

Air transport has declined dramatically over the last decade because of high running costs and the unsatisfactory state of the Republic's aviation system.

In summary, it is fair to say that transport in Tajikistan remains one of the largest environmental polluters, accounting for more than 70 per cent of pollutant emissions into the atmosphere.

In addition, the standards employed in Tajikistan regarding fuel quality and the regulation of vehicle emissions are still based on the All Union State Standards (GOST) system of the former USSR. These standards do not encourage fleet replacement nor do they meet the demands of economies in transition.

As a result, transport is a major source of emissions of carbon dioxide, one of the main greenhouse gases. According to the National Action Plan of the Republic of Tajikistan for alleviating the consequences of climate change, transport (including road, rail and air) accounted for 533,400 tons of carbon dioxide emissions. However, there is no regulation of greenhouse gas emissions in the transport sector and emissions of pollutants from mobile sources in general are primarily calculated on the basis of fuel consumption.

There is another very important environmental problem.

In a country like Tajikistan, where mountains cover more than 93 per cent of the territory with absolute altitudes ranging from 300 to 7,495 metres and where there is considerable seismic activity, development of the transport infrastructure has an exceptionally powerful effect on ecosystems, the degradation of slopes and other exogenic processes.

In that connection, particular attention needs to be paid in the maintenance and development of the highway infrastructure to choosing the best programmes so as to minimize their impact on the environment, particularly in conservation areas, which account for around one fourth of the total area of Tajikistan. Unfortunately, little attention was paid to this during Soviet times and therefore slope degradation, avalanches, mudslides, flooding, etc., began to occur along sections of roads.

It would be possible to prevent many of these natural disasters if a qualified assessment were to be made of the impact of any given project on the environment, if anti-flood and anti-mudslide structures were planned and built in good time, and if inert material quarries near roads were developed, slopes trimmed and landfill operations conducted in accordance with technical environmental safety norms.

In addition, forest plantations are of particular importance in Tajikistan for slope stability, particularly in areas close to roads: they act as a buffer against pollutant emissions and as a stabilizing factor protecting against slope degradation. Each year, up to three million saplings are planted in Tajikistan, 70 to 80 per cent of which thrive. Virtually the entire population of the country, along with domestic and international enterprises and organizations, participate in this noble enterprise.

It is my pleasure to mention the contribution of the OSCE Centre in Dushanbe, which helps to plant tens of thousands of saplings each year and is a reliable partner in research, the drafting of strategic environmental documents and the development of environmental information for the population.

In conclusion, I should like to point out that at this stage it is vital to evaluate correctly how many of the decisions we are adopting are consistent with environmental protection issues and to what extent the projects we are undertaking are mutually compatible. It is important that we solve and understand these problems so as to reduce to a minimum the negative impact on the environment and the irrational use of natural resources when developing transport and new transportation corridors.

Unfortunately, it is very difficult for Tajikistan to manage this complicated task on its own. Therefore, I should like to take this opportunity to appeal both to the OSCE, which is already doing a great deal to protect the environment in Tajikistan, and to other international organizations to assist our country as it develops the relevant infrastructure and technology to assess the impact of transport on the environment.

Thank you for your attention.