

**The 16th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum (Part 1),
Vienna, 28 – 29 January 2008**

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

**Concluding remarks by
Ambassador Aleksi Härkönen,
Head of the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship Task Force**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the opening session of our meeting, we set a clear objective for our deliberations, namely to develop ideas and recommendations for future OSCE action in the area of maritime and inland waterways co-operation. We have been addressing a number of questions such as:

- How would the OSCE involvement in the area of maritime and inland waterways co-operation contribute to strengthening security and protecting the environment?
- How can the OSCE add value to the many global, regional, national, local and private initiatives which already exist in these fields?
- How can the OSCE contribute to a better coordination of such activities?
- What could the OSCE do to promote the goals of other organisations specialised in this field?

The Helsinki Preparatory Conference in September 2007 built a good momentum for our undertaking. It concluded that the OSCE, within its general mandate of enhancing security and co-operation, can play a key role in mobilizing political will in participating States to address security, economic and environmental issues in relation to maritime and inland waterways co-operation that the OSCE could act as a facilitator and catalyst, contributing to strengthening synergies in these areas. It suggested that our Organisation can support the implementation of existing legal instruments, can disseminate best practices, promote regional co-operation, provide support to various regional frameworks as well as towards strengthening inter-regional co-operation mechanisms. The Helsinki Conference also emphasized that the OSCE can promote a multi-stakeholder dialogue, including governments, the business community, civil society and academia. Calls for capacity building activities developed by the Secretariat and the field presences, in co-operation with relevant partners, were also noted.

During the past two days we have advanced quite a lot on this path and our discussions here in Vienna contributed to clarifying the role of the OSCE in the above mentioned areas. Many specific recommendations for OSCE were formulated and they should be followed up in the Forum process and in the Economic and Environmental Committee.

Let me briefly outline some preliminary conclusions, which I believe we can draw from this meeting.

To strengthen maritime security and safety, co-operation and co-ordination at all levels is essential. We were reminded that no single government, government agency, or private sector organisation possesses the authority, knowledge or resources needed to prevent or to manage the recovery of the maritime transportation system following an incident or an accident. Hence, there can be no single program or policy that can provide overall maritime security. It is only through improved co-operation and co-ordination, through the use of multiple approaches, that we can improve maritime security and safety. It was emphasised that new technology should be put to use without delay.

In the field of maritime environmental protection, the OSCE could, first and foremost, raise awareness of the importance of environmental protection in marine waters. Secondly, it could facilitate or encourage uptake of best management practices developed by IMO and other organisations.

Transport of energy poses a serious threat to the marine environment because of the risk of accidents. Emergency preparedness and response mechanisms should be in place. The OSCE should encourage co-operation for the prevention of accidents.

The threat of invasive species carried through ballast water, illustrated by the IMO film, is a serious threat to life in sea areas, lakes and rivers, and it also affects human activities. The OSCE could contribute by advocating and supporting the implementation of the IMO's Ballast Water Management Convention. The OSCE should also seriously consider the offer made by IMO to link into and benefit from the GloBallast Partnership Program by facilitating the attendance of training events.

Environmental risk assessment and management and environmental monitoring are yet other examples of activities which the OSCE, in co-operation with partners, could support.

The OSCE should support the activities of the UNECE and the implementation of the relevant conventions.

An example of good co-operation is the well-established co-operation among the Danube River Basin countries. The principles included in the recently adopted Joint Statement could be applicable also elsewhere. The OSCE could facilitate such co-operation wherever possible.

A regional approach in maritime and inland waterways co-operation has proved to be useful in addressing specific issues in the region concerned. Sharing experiences and lessons learned in between regions could be explored among the participating States. For example, Helsinki Commission's, HELCOM's experience in developing an ambitious Baltic Sea Action Plan could be useful in other regions.

The Black Sea region is another example of growing co-operation in maritime security and safety as well as in environmental protection. The OSCE should support the initiatives and activities of organisations like the Black Sea Commission, BSC.

In this context I would like to welcome the proposal made by Ukraine to host a follow up Conference in Odessa next summer and thank the Ukrainian delegation for the information provided.

We have also touched upon co-operation in the Caspian Sea region and issues specific to the landlocked countries. The OSCE and its partners are looking forward to further discussions during the upcoming Second Preparatory Conference in Ashgabat on 6-7 March 2008. Already now I would like to express the appreciation of the Finnish Chairmanship to the government of Turkmenistan for this important initiative.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to acknowledge the great contribution of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental activities Mr. Bernard Snoy and his team to this First Part of the Forum. I would also like to express thanks to all participating States, international organisations and other participants for their valuable contribution to our common cause.

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I would like to use the opportunity to announce a photo contest under the theme of "Waterways of Life". The winner of the contest will be announced during the Prague Forum on 19-21 May 2008. Further details can be found on the OSCE Internet website.