



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The 18th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

"Promoting good governance at border crossings, improving the security of land transportation and facilitating international transport by road and rail in the OSCE region"

Prague, 24-26 May 2010

Opening Remarks

Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut

Dear Chairperson,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you all to the second part of the 18th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum.

Allow me first to express my deepest gratitude to the Government of the Czech Republic for hosting this important meeting once again and to the Kazakh Chairmanship for its full dedication and great assistance during the entire Forum process.

This Forum is an excellent example of the OSCE's unique ability to bring together stakeholders - policy makers and experts - to **discuss** pressing issues of great complexity, **exchange views** and experiences, and **build consensus** on how to advance the stability and prosperity of our region. The presence here today of such distinguished guests representing key partner organizations, OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation, makes me hopeful that this Forum will be a fruitful experience, which will contribute to the enhancement of co-operation among all of us.

This year's Forum's theme is intrinsically linked with the OSCE's history. Co-operation on transport and border crossing issues features in documents such as the Helsinki Final

Act (1975), the Bonn Document (1990) and the Maastricht Strategy Document for the OSCE Economic and Environmental Dimension (2003). The OSCE has intensified its involvement on these issues since the 14th OSCE Economic Forum in 2006. Our meeting today will build upon this rich experience in order to provide a clear set of priorities and recommendations for the future development of the OSCE's work in this area.

Transport is a crucial factor with clear **economic**, **environmental** and **security** implications.

From an **economic** perspective, transport is the basis of business and trade. It is an essential factor for economic growth and integration. Transport is crucial in today's world when frontiers between peoples and states have been blurred with the advancement of globalization and the development of new technologies.

In times of high mobility and trans-national communication, we cannot afford delays and obstacles at borders or anywhere in the international land transport circuit. Yet, as we have learned from numerous reports and studies presented in previous conferences, some 40% of the transport time along some Euro-Asian routes is actually waiting time at borders. Moreover, for every euro lost by transport operators due to barriers to road transport, such as waiting times at borders, the economy is penalised two euros in terms of missed business opportunities.

This has to change. Customs and border agencies play a decisive role in this regard. They need transparent, simplified and efficient procedures as well as high standards of professional integrity.

From a **security** point of view, transport vehicles can be used, among other things, as a tool by terrorist and organized crime groups to carry out illegal activities, such as trafficking and smuggling. Also, the possibility of terrorist attacks on transport infrastructure or vehicles represents a concern in many OSCE participating and Partner States.

Transport can also be a source of pollution and thus a factor that can create and exacerbate **environmental** threats. The transport of dangerous goods and hazardous substances also raises concerns about potential impacts on the environment.

All these challenges need to be tackled from a holistic point of view, understanding that an efficient, secure, and environmentally friendly transport system is essential to strengthening regional co-operation, fostering economic development and safeguarding regional stability.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Forum is an excellent opportunity to adopt exactly such a point of view from which we can explore innovative solutions. The OSCE's comprehensive security approach can definitively prove its usefulness in this area.

I believe there is much the OSCE can do to advance dialogue and co-operation on these issues. We offer a platform for the exchange of views, for the review and reinforcement of national and international standards, and for the generation and exercise of political will.

Our extended network of field presences, with their direct knowledge of the situation on the ground, allows the OSCE to take concrete actions when needed in support of the efforts of our participating States.

I encourage all of you to take maximum advantage of these opportunities. I encourage you to put forward ideas and solutions to existing transport and border crossing challenges, and to explore new ways to co-operate and build consensus.

I would like to thank all the representatives of OSCE participating States present here today, as well as the experts from international organizations, NGOs and the business

and academic communities, which are all crucial actors with extensive knowledge and expertise, able to provide valuable contributions.

Finally, I wish to thank Mr. Goran Svilanovic, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, and his team, for their exceptional work in preparing this Economic and Environmental Forum, and the OSCE Prague Office for its invaluable work and support.

I look forward to your contributions and wish you fruitful and stimulating discussions.

Thank you for your attention.