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Thirteenth OSCE Economic Forum

“Demographic Trends, Migration and Integrating Persons belonging to National Minorities: Ensuring Security and Sustainable Development in the OSCE area”

CLOSING REMARKS

by Marcin Swięcicki

Distinguished Chairperson,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

After five days of deliberations the time has now come to draw the conclusions of this year's 13th OSCE Economic Forum. Following the wrap up session this morning, I do not intend to summarise once more all the issues presented to us. Allow me rather to make some personal observations on the discussions we had this week in the review session and the sessions dedicated to the main theme of the Forum, as well as at the side events.

Let me first refer to the review session.

The effective implementation of OSCE commitments in the Economic and Environmental Dimension, as stipulated in the key OSCE documents, in particular the Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension, is of utmost importance. As you know, last year in Sofia the OSCE and the UNECE concluded an agreement which put our already fruitful co-operation with the UNECE on a firmer foundation. I am grateful to the UNECE for its professional contribution to the review of the implementation of OSCE commitments. I also want to thank the participating States that contributed to this analysis and answered the questionnaire.

This year, the review focused on Integration, Trade and Transport. For the first time, the review session lasted one full day. I think we are moving in the right direction since we had a chance to take an in-depth look at the Review Topics. Perhaps one deficiency has been that we identified many problems, but not much discussion was focused on the follow-up, on possible solutions. I hope that the review session helped participating

States to identify some problems and that the comparison to other states and to international standards will facilitate the effort to find remedies and improvements.

The session on Transport proved that this is a relevant issue for the OSCE and that it would be a good idea to hold the next Economic Forum on this topic.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The presence and contribution of an European Union commissioner and other leaders from international organisations, such as the International Organization for Migration, and the academic community proved that this year's theme of the Economic Forum is at the forefront of challenges faced by the international community.

I do not intend to dwell at length now on the conclusions and recommendations related to the main theme of the Forum. They were thoroughly summarized by the Chairperson of the Economic Forum, Ambassador Boris Frlec, in the morning session.

Numerous proposals, ideas and recommendations have emerged as a result of our deliberations. Together with the Chairmanship, my office will carefully analyse all of them and will in due course submit, follow-up proposals on activities to be pursued by the OSCE and its participating States. I am looking forward to discussing these proposals in the Economic and Environmental Sub-Committee as well as in the Permanent Council. I am confident that we will agree on useful follow-up activities.

Let me now share some personal observations.

Speaking about migration, we should never forget that national governments and international organisations should first of all ensure labour opportunities in the native countries of potential migrants.

During the Economic Forum, we learned how diverse and innovative policy solutions are explored by pS faced with mounting migratory pressures. The exchange of information on successful and effective practices is of key importance. I have asked delegations to submit such contributions to my office with a view to producing a **handbook on effective practices in the area of labour migration in the OSCE area**.

Here the OSCE may take a leading role in facilitating the production of such a handbook, in cooperation with expert organisations. To ensure its relevance the handbook would be developed through a consultative process involving the participating States and other relevant actors, and taking into account the global Berne Initiative, so as to avoid duplication.

So far we have received fewer than 10 such contributions, and I would therefore invite participating States to provide us with more of their experience and policies.

In formulating the agendas for possible **regional migration workshops**, the OSCE should build upon priorities identified in informal inter-governmental dialogues on the

development of comprehensive national migration systems tackling both labour migration issues and the prevention and control of irregular migration.

Before joining the OSCE, I was engaged in politics and I might eventually return to politics. There is one thing that I learned during that time, namely, that the best ideas and instruments will not find their way into practice unless public support is ensured. In order to ensure such support for adequate migration policies and effective integration policies, we must work on public awareness. There is still a strongly negative perception of migrants in destination countries. I am happy to hear that the European Commission is already working on this with journalists to clarify relevant issues and with minority NGOs to help them communicate through the media.

We have to see whether and how the OSCE can contribute to awareness raising and also how research can be stimulated in this area. We need to know and communicate to the public the costs and benefits of migration for source and destination countries. We also have to understand the consequences for illicit migration of opening legal migration channels.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Time and again, bureaucratic red tape is emerging as a reason for irregular migration and employment. Does it really make sense to require foreign employees to go back to their home country in order to apply for visa extensions and job permits if they already have a job and the employer is willing to extend the work contract? In particular, small employers are burdened by these bureaucratic procedures and such problems foster illegal employment.

We can encourage cooperation with chambers of commerce to streamline procedures in this regard.

Field presences

Our Field presences are crucial for the implementation of the OSCE mandate in the economic and environmental dimension. The side event on the labour migration project in Armenia highlighted the role the OSCE field presences can play. There are also other telling examples such as the information centre for migrants in Tajikistan, established in co-operation with the IOM and the support provided in Uzbekistan to the working group on migration. We should build upon these experiences.

Environment

Field presences will also be our main asset when addressing the root causes of environmentally induced migration. Equally, the ongoing ENVSEC initiative may serve as a basis for the identification of potential areas where environmental issues may increase migratory pressure. But more important than improvement of local sustainability, is the provision of assistance to the people who have already been forced to leave their homes because of natural or man-made disasters.

Roma and Sinti

For the second consecutive year, the OCEEA in cooperation with the ODHIR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues organized a side event dedicated to Roma and Sinti issues within the framework of the Economic Forum. The situation of Roma and Sinti in many countries is in my opinion very worrisome. Not only are they still excluded from societies, but despite numerous symposiums and conferences, deliberations, action plans, declarations etc., action at the ground level is still inadequate to address the problems. Perhaps we should monitor more closely the implementation by participating States of the OSCE Action Plan on the Roma and Sinti. OSCE institutions and my Office can also do more, provided that funding is made available for this purpose.

ATP

One side meeting highlighted the accomplishments during its first year of the Anti-Trafficking Programme (ATP) developed by my Office. Specific commitments by the private sector on self-regulation were presented. The activities of Phase II of the ATP will place greater emphasis on income generation and job creation in countries of origin. It is clear that additional extra budgetary funding is needed to continue project implementation.

In an interesting development, Japan has announced the commitment by its tourism industry to the adoption of the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism.

Mediterranean Seminar

At the Mediterranean side event, interesting links were identified between a topic of the review session – trade – and the main topic of the Forum – migration. Our Mediterranean partners have good natural conditions and an abundance of labour to cultivate tasty tomatoes, for example. However, the EU is still maintaining high barriers to agricultural imports. In the absence of free markets, farmers are abandoning their plantations and are themselves headings towards Europe. This is one more argument for eliminating agricultural import barriers in order to reap the benefits of globalisation and free trade in this sector.

The consolidated summary of the 13th OSCE Economic Forum will soon be made available to Delegations in Vienna as well as to participants. It will also be available on our website at www.osce.org/eea and we will produce a CD-ROM.

Mr. Chairperson,

Before concluding these remarks, I would like to thank you personally, as well as your team, and in particular Ms. Blažka Kepic, Mr. Robert Kokail and the three professors from Slovenia, for your excellent co-operation in the preparation of this Forum. IN addition I would like to thank you all – delegations, government representatives, international organizations, NGOs, experts, academics, business representatives, representatives of other OSCE institutions and field presences - for your valuable

contribution. I would especially like to thank our moderators, rapporteurs and lead speakers for engaging all of us in most stimulating discussions.

I am especially thankful to the dedicated team of my office -Andrea, Helen, Kilian, Gabi, Nina, Raul, Annica, Mylène, Petra and Philip- to whom a great deal of the success of this Forum has to be attributed. I would also like to thank the OSCE conference services and our technical team from Vienna, and furthermore Ambassador Jaromir Kvapil, Head of our OSCE Prague Office, his assistant Iveta Džúriková and their dedicated team. And last, but not least, I would like to thank our interpreters for their excellent work.

Mr. Chairperson, ladies and gentlemen, it was an honour and a great pleasure to be with all of you this year, and I would also like to thank all of you who attended previous fora.

I would like to say that I enjoyed thinking and working with you in this wonderful city.

Thank you and I wish all of you a safe journey home.