



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008  
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008  
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

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## **Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union**

### **16<sup>th</sup> Economic and Environmental Forum Prague, 19 May 2008**

#### **EU Opening Statement**

The European Union is very pleased to participate in the Second Part of the 16th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum.

The theme of this forum "Maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the OSCE area: Increasing security and protecting the environment" covers many topics of major interest for the European Union and its member states, and it connects very well with strategic policies of the European Union, such as those with regard to Central Asia, the Black Sea region, the European Neighbourhood and the Maritime Policy.

The EU would like to thank the Finnish Chair and the Office of the Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities for the food for thought paper prepared for this part of the Economic and Environmental Forum which will serve as a basis for our discussions here and which provides us with a comprehensive overview on the current state of our discussions and on the possible role of the OSCE in maritime and inland waterways co-operation.

Furthermore, the EU welcomes the way in which the Finnish Chairmanship has managed to include in the discussions the challenges facing the Central Asian landlocked countries in securing access to markets.

The EU supports the Chairmanship's efforts to stimulate political dialogue, including at a sub-regional level, on the role of economic development and environmental protection in

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furthering and maintaining peace, stability and security. We have several good examples that show how activities in the economic and environmental field can promote dialogue and cooperation and thus contribute to security, an outstanding one being the International Economic Rehabilitation Programme for South Ossetia, Georgia. Another recent example is the seminar organised by the OSCE Mission to Moldova and held in Odessa on 15-16 April which brought together experts from the parties to the Transdniestrian conflict to address their common economic and environmental concerns, and to discuss confidence-building measures. The seminar provided an opportunity for political representatives to meet and helped facilitate the subsequent creation of joint working groups on confidence building measures in the fields of ecology and transportation. Mr. Chairman, the EU would like to see more economic and environmental initiatives with a direct link to security and with practical outcomes.

The European Union is actively involved in contributing to enhanced environmental protection of all its surrounding seas. Its Thematic Strategy on the Marine Environment is the main guidance for these activities, together with the Marine Strategy Directive. These EU policies were presented at the first part of the Forum in Vienna. The EU looks forward to further cooperation in these areas with the OSCE. In the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), protection of the marine environment of EU adjacent seas is regularly discussed with partner countries, in particular on the basis of the objectives of the ENP Action Plans agreed with partners.

As far as the inland waterways are concerned, they are integral part of the network of Trans-European and Pan-European transport priority axes of the European Union. We will hear more about this issue in the course of this Forum.

During the discussions we had in the last months it became clear that maritime security has been the subject of intensive activities, negotiations, regulations and training within

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the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). The OSCE could contribute to the improvement of the implementation of the IMO agreements and recommendations.

The EU believes that the OSCE has a role to play in bringing together different international and regional organisations so that we can learn from each other, and can share expertise and experiences. In this way, the EEF has already played a positive role in furthering international cooperation, also on a regional level, as was the case with the Workshop on Oil Spill Preparedness and Remediation in the Caspian Sea which took place in Turkmenistan last March. We call upon the participating States to make full use of the opportunities offered and are looking forward to the follow-up activities already envisaged, including for example the International Expert Conference on Safety, Navigation and Environmental Security in a Transboundary Context in the Black Sea Basin, to take place in Odessa, Ukraine, on 24 – 26 June 2008.

The EU is of the opinion that environmental security is a major issue in the second dimension. The Madrid Declaration on Environment and Security was a major contribution of the OSCE in that field.

Mr. Chairman, the European Commission and the High Representative for the European Foreign and Security Policy submitted in March of this year to the European Council a paper on Climate Change and International Security. In this paper it is said, inter alia, that the rapid melting of the polar ice caps, in particular, the Arctic, is opening up new waterways and international trade routes. The expected rising of sea levels due to global warming may also cause serious problems to the maritime and coastal transport, requiring considerable adjustment measures. The paper concludes therefore that there is, inter alia, an increasing need to address the growing debate over territorial claims and access to new trade routes by different countries, and possible changes in existing routes, taking into account environmental considerations. It is important to raise

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awareness, also among OSCE participating States, of issues such as this, which may become a source of tension or even conflict.

The European Union is and has always been supportive of a strong EED. The strengthened role which the second dimension has been enjoying during recent years is very much welcomed. Nevertheless, the EU believes that is now time to look more strategically at this dimension, building on the progress made, and with the help of the present and future chairmanships set a number of broad targets which could guide our work in coming years. The EU therefore believes that participating States should start a debate about the future direction and programmes of this dimension, with a strong focus on added value to the security aspects of the organisation. Such an approach, within a cross dimensional framework, could result in a Ministerial Council decision on the future tasks of the Economic and Environmental Dimension.

Finally, we would like to thank the Czech Republic for once again hosting the second part of the EEF and for the warm welcome. We are also very grateful to the Finnish Chairmanship who, together with the OSCE Co-ordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities and his dedicated staff, have done an excellent job in preparing the Forum. We look forward to interesting discussions in the days ahead.

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia\* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and Serbia, the European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area Norway, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

\* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process

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