

Welcoming remarks

H.E. Karel Schwarzenberg, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

Mr. Chairman,

Mr. Secretary-General,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you on behalf of the Government of the Czech Republic on the occasion of the nineteenth OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum traditionally taking place here in Prague.

At the outset, let me most cordially welcome the OSCE representatives, led by Secretary-General Mr. Lamberto Zannier, the representatives of the 56 participating States of the OSCE, as well as the OSCE Partners for Co-operation and the representatives of international organizations and other participants in this meeting.

After Astana Summit where we reconfirmed our dedication to all OSCE norms, principles and commitments, it is clear that we need to increase our efforts to work towards more visible, relevant and credible OSCE.

The Economic and Environmental dimension is not only vital part of our cross-dimensional approach towards security in the OSCE area, it is also a field where practical co-operation helps to restore trust and confidence among OSCE participating States. Trust and confidence is a sine qua non for good international relations. Any action leading in this direction should be supported. I am convinced, and good examples from the history prove it, that building trust and confidence through the economic cooperation could help in conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation. The protracted conflicts in the OSCE space are not an exception in this regard.

We gathered here today to discuss the Sustainable transport and energy. These are topics of strategic importance for the economic growth of the OSCE participating States. Yet challenges are complex and diverse. To achieve the progress, it is necessary first to eliminate the obstacles that still exist among the participating States and co-operate more closely.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Looking ahead, we should use the most of the opportunities of the OSCE events, including this Forum for an open discussion and formulation of conclusions and recommendations and identify the best practices that can help to address challenges across the OSCE region. This year's theme of the Forum is a topical one and the Czech Republic will therefore later actively contribute to the debate with our perspective of the regional co-operation in the field of energy security.

The discussions held at the first Preparatory meeting of the Forum in Vienna and later at the second Preparatory meeting in Druskininkai in Lithuania confirmed that the topic of sustainable transport and energy is of great importance as part of comprehensive approach to security in the OSCE and neighbouring regions. But the OSCE needs more. We need to work together more intensively to address pressing issues and work towards tangible results. We already have good examples in some areas in all three dimensions, yet we also have many other examples of non-compliance with the OSCE commitments and principles, and, as stated in the Astana Declaration: "more must be done to ensure full respect for, and implementation of, these core principles and commitments, notably in the areas of human rights and fundamental freedoms."

In conclusion, I would like to express my hope that all sessions of the 19th Economic and Environmental Forum will mark a step forward in our effort to deal with these issues. Mutual exchange of experience on this topic should eventually bring us closer to a common understanding and common approaches.

I thank the Chairmanship and organizers of previous debates for their efforts. I also thank the Coordinator of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, the OSCE Secretariat and its Prague Office for all the preparatory work they have done. And last but not least, let me express my high appreciation to the international organizations present here today for their valuable input to our debate.

I wish you a pleasant and productive stay in Prague.

Thank you for your attention.