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**Statement by Amb. Janez Lenarčič, Head of Delegation of the Republic of Slovenia  
at the Opening Plenary Session of the OSCE 12<sup>th</sup> Economic Forum 2004  
Prague, 31 May 2004**

Mr Chairman,

As a Troika member and incoming Chair-in-Office, Slovenia attaches great importance to the OSCE Economic and Environmental Dimension. Over the years the OSCE with its network of missions and institutions has steadily become an important *facilitator of change* and *a creator of opportunities* also in the field of Economic and Environmental dimension.

This year's Economic Forum is the first to take place following the adoption, in Maastricht, of the New Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension. The new Strategy has been in the heart of our endeavors throughout the course of this year's preparatory cycle for the Prague Economic Forum.

We consider the three preparatory seminars as having been highly relevant and meaningful. By focusing on the development of small and medium enterprises, attraction of investments and development of educational and professional skills as central themes of the preparatory seminars, important issues have been raised and useful ideas for future action have been developed. We believe that many useful suggestions stemming from the preparatory cycle will provide for the creation of conditions necessary to develop and consolidate sound functioning economies in many OSCE regions.

Bearing in mind the differences in cultures, traditions and the levels of social and economic development of the OSCE Participating States, it is important that the *priorities of international co-operation, good governance, sustainable development and early warning mechanisms are also reflected in the outcome of the Forum*. Key significance should be attached to the follow-up and implementation process that stems from the basic principles and objectives of the New Strategy Document and from the activities linked to the Economic Forum.

The OSCE is *well placed to advise on how to promote best practices and avoid duplication*. OSCE's strengths in the Economic and Environmental dimension traditionally lie in monitoring, analyzing and reporting processes. At the same time it must be underlined that to a large extent the actual implementation of tasks remains with Participating States as well as other important and qualified international organizations. To *trigger the mechanism of effective implementation, the OSCE needs to improve coherence of action and strengthen synergy with competent international organizations and other relevant players* through better coordination and information exchange. In this context we hope for an early and successful conclusion of ongoing negotiations on the proposed *UNECE-OSCE Memorandum of Understanding* that should pave the way for an *enhanced cooperation* of the two organizations.

While the area of *good governance* is currently justly at the forefront of OSCE's deliberations, we are of the opinion that priority should also be given to *enhanced economic cooperation among the various OSCE regions*. OSCE Participating States should make all necessary efforts to gradually *develop strong and dynamic economies so as to compete successfully with other areas of strong economic growth in the world*.

Mr. Chairman,

In my capacity as representative of incoming CiO, allow me to inform you on our proposal for *the Theme of the 13<sup>th</sup> Economic Forum in 2005*. Since January, we have conducted extensive consultations with OSCE Participating States concerning this issue. On the basis of these consultations, we propose that the theme for the OSCE Economic Forum in 2005 would be *"Demographic Trends, Migration and Integrating Persons Belonging to National Minorities: Ensuring Security and Sustainable Development in the OSCE Area"*. We believe that this theme enjoys wide interest and commands general support among Participating States.

We would appreciate it if the *decision* on the venue, date and theme of the next year's Economic Forum would be *made at the meeting of the reinforced Permanent Council on 1 July in Vienna*. That would allow us to have the necessary guidance and sufficient time for good preparation. We are looking forward to further discussion in this regard.

Thank you.