



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

16th Economic and Environmental Forum Vienna, 28th January 2008

EU Opening Statement

Mr. Chairman, Your Excellency Minister Tiilikainen, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The European Union is very pleased to be participating in the First Part of the 16th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum. We believe this year's theme of "Maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the OSCE area; increasing security and protecting the environment" can make the OSCE's Economic and Environmental Dimension a more effective tool for promoting security.

As we pointed out in our response to the address by the Chairman-in-Office Minister Kanerva, the principal guidelines of "continuity, coherence and cooperation" chosen by the Finnish Chairmanship reflect some of the key aspects of our work here at the OSCE, and we hope that they will inspire our common work, also in the second dimension, for the years to come.

The theme of the 16th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum is a clear demonstration of the Chairmanship's vision. The First Preparatory Conference in Helsinki has already shown that it provides some much-needed continuity to the second dimension with its clear links to the issues discussed in the two previous fora: transport, and environment and security.

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The OSCE's comprehensive concept of security is of increasing importance, including in the economic and environmental fields. Cooperation between countries forges stability and prosperity. The OSCE is a unique political forum for promoting dialogue and building bridges between policy-makers and experts of participating States as well as between various other stakeholders, private enterprises, academia, and NGOs.

The EU supports the Chairmanships' efforts to stimulate political dialogue, including at a sub-regional level, on the role of economic development and environmental protection in furthering and maintaining peace, stability and security. We firmly believe that efficient and secure maritime and inland waterways transport can contribute to these goals.

The EU attaches great importance to maritime transport and inland waterways. As a result of its geography, its history and the modern phenomenon of globalisation, nearly 90% of its external trade and more than 40% of its internal trade goes by sea. Inland waterway transport also plays an important role for the transport of goods in the European Union. More than 35,000 kilometres of waterways connect hundreds of cities and industrial regions.

The development of transport links to enhance regional economic cooperation and stability is of strategic importance. The EU stands ready to promote regional cooperation, and to assist landlocked countries and regions in overcoming their transport problems.

The EU is looking forward to an intensive debate during the first part of the Economic and Environmental Forum. We encourage the representatives of the participating States and the OSCE Field Operations to contribute actively so as to make the Forum a success.

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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, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Armenia align themselves with this declaration.

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

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