



## Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE  
Economic and Environmental Activities

Vienna, 19 May 2004

### The Twelfth Meeting of the OSCE Economic Forum

**“New Challenges for Building up Institutional and Human Capacity  
for Economic Development and Co-operation”  
Prague, 31 May - 4 June 2004**

#### **INTRODUCTORY NOTE**

*(Revised)*

The purpose of this paper is to introduce the agenda of the Economic Forum, present its structure and the issues to be discussed.

Logistic Information and the Registration Form for the Twelfth OSCE Economic Forum will be circulated separately.

Pursuant the PC Decisions No. 558, dated 31 July 2003, and No. 602, dated 25 March 2004, the Twelfth Meeting of the Economic Forum will take place in Prague from 31 May to 4 June 2004. The theme of the Forum will be **“New Challenges for Building up Institutional and Human Capacity for Economic Development and Co-operation”**.

A special session will be devoted to integration processes in the OSCE region.

The Economic Forum will also review the implementation of commitments in the economic and environmental dimension. The Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities will have the opportunity to present the Activity Report of his office, which will contribute to the deliberations over the next days.

Since this year’s Forum is the first one following the adoption of the OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension, discussions will also focus on the work on implementing the document. In particular the Forum will discuss, starting from the existing experience, ongoing and planned activities, on how to further enhance co-operation between the OSCE and its partners.

According to the OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension, paragraph 3.1.1, “The Economic Forum remains the major annual event of, and provides the annual focus for activities in, the OSCE economic and environmental dimension. It should be made more effective by ensuring a better targeting of its theme(s) on issues of major concern, an improved preparatory process and an effective procedure for ensuring follow-up of its deliberations.”

The value and the impact of the Economic Forum within the OSCE is generally measured by the capacity to generate recommendations that can further be transformed into follow-up

activities. The structure of the Forum and the selection of topics stemming from the suggestions from preparatory seminars tries to enhance this process.

The Forum should offer a framework for dialogue between representatives of governments, international, regional and sub-regional organizations, OSCE institutions and field missions, NGOs, the business community and academics.

Participating States are highly encouraged to diversify their delegations and to contribute to the debate on a multi-sectoral level.

Furthermore, all the OSCE participating States are equally invited to prepare papers for distribution in advance. The Forum should stimulate a free flowing debate. Room for prepared statements during the Forum will be limited.

### **Addressing the main theme of the Economic Forum – “New Challenges for Building up Institutional and Human Capacity for Economic Development and Co-operation”**

As part of the preparatory process for the Forum, three seminars were organized:

- in Yerevan, on 17 - 18 November 2003, on “Supporting SME Development”
- in Dublin, on 16 – 17 February 2004 on “Stimulating Foreign and Domestic Investment”
- in Bishkek, on 29 – 30 March 2004, on “Professional Skills Needed for Developing a Market Economy”

Each seminar covered one of the three sub-themes of the Economic Forum. Consolidated Summaries, including the main suggestions stemming from each seminar, were distributed under the following reference numbers: SEC.GAL/218/03 (Yerevan), SEC.GAL/48/04 (Dublin) and SEC.GAL/91/04/Corr. 1 (Bishkek). They are also available at the OCEEA and on the OSCE web-site: [www.osce.org/eea](http://www.osce.org/eea).

The Documents distributed during the preparatory seminars, available in electronic version, have been compiled on a CR-ROM that will be distributed to the delegations.

The conclusions and suggestions of the three preparatory seminars were instrumental in identifying a number of priority issues and provided the input for the preparations of the Economic Forum. To avoid general discussions and a repetition of the debates in the preparatory seminars, participants in the Economic Forum are encouraged to focus on the priority issues mentioned under each session and focus on concrete proposals for the OSCE and its participating States. Forum’s deliberations should rather focus on how the OSCE and the participating States should further proceed in these areas of activity.

The seminars highlighted the idea that in order to achieve sustainable and long term economic development consistent policies designed to improve the business environment, having a positive impact on both SME development and on foreign and domestic investment, have to be adopted and implemented. Institutions operating in these fields should be further strengthened. Commitment to co-operation between the OSCE participating States is equally important.

A key issue for the successful implementation of these policies is the public-private dialogue and partnership.

A general understanding has emerged regarding the increasing role the private sector can play in addressing issues related to institutional development, sustainable development, corporate responsibility, conflict prevention and post conflict rehabilitation. The co-operation and partnership between governments, international organizations and the private sector should be further enhanced.

On the other hand there is still a need in many transition countries to strengthen the local capacity of the business organizations in order to provide adequate services and develop a fruitful partnership with official authorities.

The development of human resources has been identified as an essential crosscutting ingredient for successful economic development and co-operation. Human capital shall be strengthened in both the public and private sectors, at local and national levels. A particular attention shall be devoted to the youth. Vocational and academic training in economic and environmental matters, responding to the market needs is a useful investment for the future. Co-operation in these field shall be further pursued.

The OSCE has a role and can develop programmatic activities in all of the above mentioned areas.

### **Structure of the Working Groups/Sessions:**

For each working group/session a limited number of experts will be invited to make presentations to stimulate the discussion based on the suggestions of the three preparatory seminars.

The OCEEA and Economic and Environmental Officers of OSCE field presences (EEOs) will present a number of ongoing and planned activities on specific subjects of various working groups and sessions.

### **Plenary Session – Partnership with the Business Community for Institutional and Human Capacity Building**

- OSCE can advocate for a stronger involvement of business community in promoting good governance, institutional and human capital development, conflict prevention and post conflict rehabilitation as well as a stronger co-operation between international organizations, governments and the business sector and international NGOs;
- OSCE can be of assistance in providing linkages between major investors and local SMEs;
- OSCE can develop joint activities in co-operation with relevant partners representing the private sector, including by targeting their assistance to vulnerable regions/groups, strengthening local capacity, improving the investment climate at local level, etc.;
- OSCE can encourage and support the creation of business advisory councils;
- OSCE can support public private partnership initiatives;
- OSCE can further study the idea of supporting the establishment of a Private World Fund of multi-national enterprises to promote the improvement of investment climate conducive to FDI;
- OSCE can promote stakeholders dialogue between governments, universities and the business sector in the field of education;
- OSCE should better use the concept of the Platform for Co-operative Security and facilitate joint efforts to promote the above mentioned actions.

### **Working Group A – Political commitment for institutional development and reform**

### **Session A 1 – Creating awareness of the value of the environment through education and responsible economic development, including eco-tourism**

- OSCE can use developed structures to introduce and promote activities related to sustainable development and to disseminate best practice as defined by the UNECE Strategy for Education on Sustainable Development;
- OSCE can promote activities that result in informational material and text books written in the local language on the subject of sustainable development;
- Projects such as “The Green Pack”, developed by REC, and similar educational packages can be supported;
- OSCE can promote stakeholder dialogue and private sector involvement in the field of environment protection and SME development in eco-tourism.

*OSCE has been engaged in the promotion of eco-tourism as a means for economic development and income generation in underserved areas and has supported a number of activities in South Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. OSCE can build upon this experience.*

### **Session A 2 – Creating the framework for sustainable development through legislative reform and institutional capacity building**

- Participating States should pay due attention to environmental implications when drafting legislation to stimulate investment and economic activity. When supporting the development of economic and commercial legislation and policies in various areas to promote favourable conditions for investment OSCE should encourage the inclusion of environmental standards.
- OSCE can promote the ratification and full implementation of existing international environmental legal instruments, including the relevant UN conventions;

*OSCE has engaged in projects aiming at introducing EU legislative standards in EU neighbouring countries and can continue this work.*

*The OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro supported the effort to create an Environmental Code for Serbia and Montenegro.*

- OSCE should encourage self regulation initiatives of investors to promote good governance, protect environment, etc;
- OSCE should promote regional co-operation in the field of environment, and continue to develop the Environment and Security Initiative and other relevant programmes;
- OSCE can continue to promote information sharing on environmental matters by supporting the establishment of Public Information (Aarhus) Centers;

### **Sessions A 3 and A 4 – Improving the business climate by building local capacity and promoting co-operation**

- Participating States should improve the operating environment for SMEs as well as the domestic conditions for investments by implementing effective economic and institutional measures; the focus should be on a number of essential policy and programmatic areas such as: property rights including land ownership, good governance/anti corruption, taxation, mediation and arbitration mechanisms, improving access to finance for SMEs, etc. Based on the priorities identified by the participating States, the OSCE can provide assistance, in co-operation with partner organizations, in legislation drafting and implementation, institutional development and capacity building; a key issue is the support for the establishment and development of investment promotion agencies.

*OSCE can build upon its previous experiences in Albania and the developing activities in Tajikistan on the issue of property rights and land reform.*

*In the field of investment promotion and taxation OSCE can promote successful models such as the Irish experience and others.*

*In the field of mediation/arbitration, OSCE can support follow-up activities to the results of the Regional Conference on “Dispute Resolution as an Instrument to Facilitating SME operations” organized in October 2003 in Kyrgyzstan (preliminary results were presented during the preparatory seminar in Yerevan) and encourage possible replication in other OSCE countries, as deemed appropriate.*

- The financial infrastructure has been identified as a fundamental element for stimulating investment and economic activity in general. Therefore OSCE can raise awareness, build public confidence and assist government to address economic concerns stemming from a cash economies and growing informal sectors in many of the transition countries. In turn OSCE can play a valuable role in mobilizing partners to develop activities to strengthen the capacity of the financial/banking system with an emphasis on enhancing the development of micro-credit institutions to provide greater access to financing for SMEs and micro-businesses.

*OSCE can build upon its experience in Kazakhstan whereby a national industry assessment of the micro-credit industry was conducted with local partners with follow-up recommendations to be implemented. In addition, OSCE can co-operate with other partners and develop activities that couple training, financial assistance and institutional development to generate new jobs, higher incomes and greater economic sustainability in rural and underserved regions.*

- Participating States should share information and experiences and better utilize existing international settings and co-operation initiatives by focusing on practical issues. OSCE can play a facilitating role in promoting and supporting bilateral and regional programmes and co-operative initiatives, through study visits, twinnings, sharing of best practices, etc.

*OSCE Office in Yerevan assisted in organizing an International Investment Forum, in London, focused on the mining industry, with a view to attracting investment in Armenia in that sector. Similar initiatives can be envisaged.*

*OCEEA and the Office of the Project Co-ordinator in Kiev, at the request of Ukrainian authorities, in co-operation with the Irish authorities, at the initiative of the SigmaBleyzer Foundation could provide assistance for a study visit of Ukrainian high level representatives to Ireland, focused on the policy reforms needed for improving the business environment, in particular the investment climate. Similar initiatives can be envisaged.*

- Internationally recognized guidelines and legislation should be adopted and implemented. OSCE can advocate international guidelines and legislation relevant for SME development, investment and trade and promote their ratification and implementation by the participating States, in co-operation with other organizations such as OECD, WTO etc.

*OSCE is co-operating with OECD and UNODC in the field of good governance and combating corruption. A similar partnership can be developed with the OECD in other areas pertaining to investment and SME.*

*OSCE Presence in Albania experience in supporting the implementation of the Free Trade Agreement signed under the auspices of the Stability Pact could be replicated on a country and regional level. Moreover, follow-up to this effort - the development of a project designed to introduce the basic principles of WTO to the business community through a series of seminars- could be supported and encouraged in other OSCE countries, as requested. In general, the concept of promoting public – private dialogue and co-operation to address impediments to business and investment is a valuable institutional building activity that can be further envisaged.*

- OSCE can develop, in co-operation with other international actors, capacity building programmes for public administration staff to strengthen their skills and knowledge in the field of economics, finance and budgeting, municipal planning and investment and SME promotion, while fostering transparency and public participation; OSCE can support twinning and international exchanges for civil servants operating in the above mentioned areas.

*OSCE can build upon the BiH mission experience since 1998 of the Municipal Infrastructure Finance and Implementation (MIFI).*

*The Judicial Reform program developed by the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro in co-operation with other partners can also serve as an example.*

## **Working Group B – Capacity building for the private sector**

### **Sessions B 1 and B 2 – Supporting entrepreneurship as a means of economic empowerment**

- OSCE can promote economic empowerment of men, women and youth through the provision of information, training, coupled with micro-credit support, where appropriate, in co-operation with other actors, and lobby for government support for (entrepreneurial) education.. Specific measures could be applied to enhance the inclusion of minorities and underrepresented groups in the overall economic development process.
- OSCE can develop and implement successful training programs both for start-up and existing businesses, eg: YES - Young Entrepreneurship Seminars including technical training for farmers and other marginalized groups; these efforts should be encouraged through local business associations and employers unions, targeting in large part disinvested and border regions;
- OSCE can support the creation of SMEs in the field of eco-tourism and raise awareness of local authorities of the income generation potential involved in eco-tourism;
- OSCE can encourage private sector co-operation in providing internship and vocational training opportunities in order to meet the emerging labour market needs in transition economies as well as to provide economic opportunities for vulnerable population groups.

*The YES program, already implemented in a number of over 8 countries, should be further enhanced and replicated.*

*Previous OSCE activities such as the summer camps for the youth organized in Tajikistan on economic issues can also be further developed and replicated where needed.*

*OSCE can support the implementation of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) models of private sector internships and vocational training programmes for at risk population groups. Co-operation with these organizations should be further enhanced.*

*OSCE can envisage the development of a programmatic co-operation with EBRD in disadvantaged regions*

*OSCE missions' experiences with regard to training and economic empowerment for women in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan can be further developed.*

### **Session B 3 and B 4– Strengthening service and networking capacity of business organizations**

- In order to achieve sustainable results it is needed to strengthen the local support capacity for entrepreneurs. Therefore the OSCE can promote and support programs to increase the operational capacity of businesses associations and support entities.
- OSCE can support the institutional development of strong and independent business associations, chambers of commerce, and development services, strengthening their political lobbying/bargaining power and increase their capacity to promote SMEs and private sector development by meeting the needs of the business community. To this end OSCE should develop capacity building programmes in co-operation with partner organizations.

*OSCE should develop a programmatic approach in supporting the development of private sector local capacities.*

*The OSCE Center in Yerevan developed, last fall, in co-operation with the International Chamber of Commerce, a project contributing to the institutional development of the Armenian Chamber of Commerce and Industry network and to strengthening the capacity to provide effective services to its members. An initial assessment has been completed and other partners such as USAID agreed to provide further technical assistance. This kind of activity can be reviewed and possibly replicated elsewhere. The co-operation with the above mentioned partners and others interested in such activities should be strengthened.*

- OSCE can promote contacts and networking among business associations throughout OSCE participating States; OSCE can provide linkages with the private sector, international organizations and local government agencies to facilitate the spread of the business support services provided by those organizations. OSCE should facilitate business networking and information sharing on a local and regional level on existing opportunities, resources and assistance available, utilizing existing structures, if available, and in co-operation with international and national partners. At local level, the OSCE missions could facilitate the development of a network for SMEs with linkages to and involvement of local and international organizations active in the country; this network could be co-ordinated at an HQ level.

*OSCE can enhance its co-operation with the International network for SMEs (INSME) in networking and disseminating information and best practices.*

- OSCE should support the creation and the activity of local and regional business advisory councils.

*In South Eastern Europe OSCE can develop co-operation with the existing business support network of the Stability Pact in the field of business support. In the Caucasus OSCE can enhance its co-operation with the German Agency for Technical Co-operation (GTZ) and the GTZ business centers as well as with the BSEC Business Council. In Central Asia the OSCE can envisage the promotion and development of a Central Asian Business Advisory Council.*

### **Joint Session of Working Groups A and B – Public Private Dialogue and Partnership**

- Participating States should recognize the role and competence of independent business associations and Chambers of Commerce, facilitate their establishment and development and co-operate with them as valuable partners;
- OSCE should advocate the recognition by governments of business organizations as valuable partners;
- Participating States should promote a comprehensive and permanent dialogue and partnership with business community (including by creation of joint boards/councils and dialogue with business advisory councils) in order to achieve a consensus on priorities, objectives, strategies and policies;
- OSCE can promote multi-stakeholder dialogue and play a facilitating role in promoting public-private partnerships. Activities could include the convening national and international meetings and support for the dissemination of information in order to develop and implement a strategies and/or concrete activities for removing or mitigating obstacles to business and investment.

### **Working Group C – Human capital development as an investment for the future**

#### **Sessions C 1 and C 2 – Reform in the field of education**

- Participating States should recognize the importance of human capital for economic development and adopt measures to continuously develop the human capital, by implementing consistent, long term policies in this field and diversifying the range of skills;
- OSCE can support the reforms undertaken by a transition country in the fields of higher education and vocational training to meet the new market needs and international standards. Particular attention should be paid to issues related to reforming the legal framework, degree structure and content, pedagogy, accreditation and quality assurance, degree recognition, infrastructure and faculty remuneration, education financing and promotion of the implementations of various measures stemming from the Bologna Process;

- The OSCE can advocate the inclusion of entrepreneurial education and related training material into school curricula of participating States as well as into the formal academic sector including education for scientists and engineers. This could be done through compilation and dissemination of best practises at the OSCE level regarding curricula development and implementation;
- OSCE should continue to promote the principles of sustainable development.

*The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina accumulated a lot of experience with regard to education and training and carried out numerous programs. This experience can be further analyzed and eventually adapted and replicated.*

### **Session C 3 – Supporting academic education and research through co-operation and exchanges**

- OSCE should support the capacity building of faculty and students in Economics and Economics related subjects to international standards;
- OSCE can support stakeholders dialogue (government bodies, universities and the business sector) in these fields and promote public private partnership initiatives in shaping the educational institutions and programmes, co-financing research and development for innovation and ensuring good correlation between education and labour market requirements;
- OSCE can support inter-institutional co-operation on bilateral, regional and international level, and building of networks to promote exchange of information, research findings and know-how to transition countries (i.e. access to internal electronic libraries and databases) as well as further access to internships, fellowships and faculty and student exchanges;
- OSCE should, if needed, facilitate co-operation between government, academia, NGOs and international organisations and the private sector to develop fresh initiatives to counter “brain drain”.

*OSCE can continue its discussions with the IFC regarding co-operation on an internship model for vulnerable, young population groups.*

*Various initiatives in the field of education, carried out by other organizations such as the Eurasia Foundation, EU, the Open Society Institute, etc should be further studied and the OSCE shall strengthen its co-operation and partnership with those organizations.*

### **Review of the implementation of OSCE commitments in the economic and environmental dimension focusing on the investment climate**

In the past years the review of the implementation of commitments made by the OSCE participating States in the Economic and Environmental Dimension has been an important part of the agenda of the annual Economic Forum.

Traditionally, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe played a supportive role in reviewing the implementation of OSCE commitments in the economic and environmental dimension by preparing and submitting each year to the OSCE Economic Forum a background report to serve as a basis for the discussions.

Following the adoption of the Strategy Document which calls for improving the review of implementation of commitments and provides a number of guidelines in that respect, the OSCE and the UNECE have engaged in a consultation process on how to streamline their future co-operation. This comprehensive process will be finalized by signing an agreement between the two organizations, governing their general co-operation, including the review of commitments. The consultation process is still ongoing and therefore the general



understanding is that, with regard to the UNECE contribution to the review session of the OSCE Economic Forum, this year is a transitory one.

The topic selected for this year's review session is investment climate.

The UNECE agreed to provide a background document for the discussion on the review of commitments focused on the investment climate in the OSCE region. This document is to be prepared in advance and will be circulated to the OSCE delegations in due course. Input from other international organizations, and e.g. from the European Commission and the EBRD, is welcomed, according to paragraph 3.2.2. of the Strategy Document.

Moreover, according to paragraphs 3.2.5. and 3.2.6. of the Strategy Document, and given the specific topic selected for review this year, contributions from academia, the business community and civil society, in particular business organizations, business advisory councils, business chambers should be enhanced and these organizations may be invited to present their views.

Improving the investment climate is a highly relevant topic and an essential element for economic development and co-operation. It is mentioned in many key OSCE documents referring to the economic and environmental Dimension. Moreover, investment climate is one of the topics of this year's Economic Forum. Therefore, focusing the review session on this issue can offer valuable input to Economic Forum's deliberations during other following working sessions and provide the opportunity to further examine areas where more progress needs to be made, identify problems, gaps and needs and propose new measures and policies for the OSCE and its participating States.

### **Special Session on integration processes in the OSCE region**

OSCE countries are engaged in various regional integration schemes, with most of the focus on trade and economic matters. The most ambitious scheme is the EU integration process that started with the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community by 6 states in 1951. The Founding Fathers of the European integration process aimed it at assuring post-war reconciliation and political stability through economic co-operation. Most importantly, they shared fundamental values in terms of democracy, political and economic freedoms and rights. Their initiative proved to be successful. The reduction and then the elimination of trade barriers among member states contributed to an expansion of their economies and to an improvement in the standards of living. Such outcomes can be related to economies of scale and competition created by a large market. Above all, war became unimaginable between members of the European community.

The European integration project has evolved into what is now an economic and political union, the European Union of 25 members, and it ensured peaceful co-operation between its member states for more than half a century, something that had not happened for ages. Other countries are preparing themselves for the next waves of accession. In addition, the EU has a wide range of co-operation agreements with third countries aimed at enabling them to benefit from the integration process. The new concept of "Wider Europe", called now "New Neighbourhood", is being elaborated to strengthen ties with neighbouring non-member countries in the East and South.

Following the momentum created by the EU, other countries started similar initiatives. EFTA is one of them. More recently NAFTA was created, allowing for a free trade area between the US, Canada and Mexico.

Transition countries also promoted various regional and sub-regional co-operation and integration initiatives (such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), established in 1991 by twelve ex-Soviet republics, GUUAM, CEFTA, the Black Sea Economic Co-operation Organization, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Russian-Belarus State Union, the Eurasian Economic Community, etc.) aiming at promoting economic development, trade and co-operation among the parties. In 2003 Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine concluded the “Common Economic Space” Agreement seeking to deepen their economic ties and boost intra-CIS trade.

In 2003 the Russian Federation and the EU endorsed the concept of the Common European Economic Space (CEES) which is designed to serve as a major instrument of further integration process between Russia and the EU aimed at supporting stability and long-term economic growth for the benefit of the OSCE region as a whole.

Regional integration processes in the OSCE region raise many questions:

- What criteria are or should be used to assess the impacts of regional integration schemes?
- How can regional integration processes help the OSCE participating States to meet the challenges of globalisation?
- What are the conditions for successful integration?
- Are the various initiatives within the OSCE region compatible with each other?
- How can these initiatives be harmonised and made complementary?
- How can common economic spaces contribute to the integration processes in the OSCE region?
- What are the implications of EU enlargement and deepening on third countries?
- How to avoid the emergence of new dividing lines in Europe as a result of regional integration schemes and how to minimise possible negative impact of integration processes on third countries?
- How to ensure the compatibility between regional integration schemes and WTO rules?
- What is the role of inter-regional and trans-frontier economic ties?
- In the absence of effective regional integration, could trade and transportation facilitation measures still be used to help improve economic relations between countries?
- How can OSCE institutions, partner organisations, civil society (NGOs), academia and business circles contribute to economic integration among OSCE participating states?

More specifically, when discussing regional integration issues in the OSCE regions, three sets of issues could be distinguished:

1. The status and role of integration processes (general aspects, latest development, new tendencies, regional and sub-regional integration versus the challenges of globalisation, the development of OSCE-wide economic co-operation, contribution to European stability and security).
2. Compatibility / harmonisation of integration processes (making them compatible, mutually beneficial and complementary; fulfilling WTO rules and obligations, minimising negative impacts on third countries and prevention of emergence of new dividing lines).
3. Perspective for integration processes in the OSCE region (new concepts, further formation of common economic spaces, contribution from growing inter-regional and trans-frontier economic ties, the role of civil society, academia and business community).

The special session of the Economic Forum shall address these key-issues and questions.

## **Side events:**

### **I. Promoting entrepreneurship for Roma and Sinti**

The Maastricht Ministerial Council adopted the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area (MC.DEC/3/03). Chapter IV of the Action Plan refers to socio-economic issues. The OCEEA is tasked, *inter alia*, to support development of the employability and entrepreneurial skills of Roma and Sinti people through the establishment of training and retraining programs, SME development, facilitate economic and social insertion by acting as a catalyst for support by partner organizations, stimulate better access by Roma and Sinti people to regular training programs, etc.

The session will explore ways and means of developing such activities, in co-operation with the ODIHR-CPRSI, other international organizations and Roma NGOs.

### **II. The Anti-trafficking Programme (ATP) and the status of its implementation**

As a follow-up to the 11th OSCE Economic Forum and also with a view to the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings the OCEEA developed its Anti-Trafficking Programme (SEC.GAL/13/04/rev.1). After discussion and the endorsement in the EESC in February 2004, the first phase of the implementation of this programme has been launched. OCEEA is co-operating closely with the Austrian NGO Respect and the IOM- Vienna as well as with other stakeholders in the implementation of all three sub-programmes of the ATP which include: self-regulation of private industry, awareness raising in Western countries and economic empowerment.

The side event will provide the opportunity to present the recent developments and the plans for the future.

### **III. Promoting co-operation with the Mediterranean Partners**

The OSCE Permanent Council adopted, on 2 December 2003, the Decision No. 571 on Further Dialogue and Co-operation with the Partners for Co-operation and Exploring the Scope for Wider Sharing of OSCE Norms, Principles and Commitments with Others.

In line with that decision and given the interest expressed by the Mediterranean Partners in the OSCE economic and environmental dimension, the session will explore areas of potential co-operation with the Mediterranean Partners.