



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

First Preparatory Conference to the 18th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

Astana, 12-13 October 2009

“Promoting good governance at border crossings, improving the security of land transportation and facilitating international transport by road and rail in the OSCE region”

Closing Remarks by

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are concluding two days of intensive deliberations. We have heard stimulating speakers’ presentations and many relevant comments from the floor. Let me thank all of you, dear participants, and congratulate you all for your pro active attitude and for your contribution to the success of our meeting.

A Consolidated Summary of this conference will be prepared in due time and will be discussed in the Economic and Environmental Committee in Vienna. Let me now try to summarize what I think are the main conclusions of our meeting.

Transport and cross-border facilitation is at the same time a challenge and a responsibility. It provides important opportunities to all of the OSCE participating States. Decisions taken in this sphere today will determine the conditions for the future functioning of businesses and the lives of people in the OSCE are. It is therefore important that we find solutions, which are mutually acceptable, as well as feasible in the long run. Further dialogue is needed to develop further cooperation between governments and to improve the coherence of transport and border crossing policies. Strong political will is necessary to ensure that interstate cooperation and coordination are efficient enough and dynamise trade.

The conference emphasized that the efficiency of transport and border crossings, at regional level, would greatly benefit from the introduction of unified standards and the creation of integrated networks. It might be of interest for the participating States to consider stepping away from the system of bilateral agreements, and instead rationalize and harmonize their approaches at regional level. This would also help integrate the regional transport complexes into the international transport system.

The OSCE, as a regional political organization with a wide membership, could be a useful platform in this regard. The OSCE can facilitate and stimulate regional cooperation. Our Organization can continue to advocate and promote the ratification and effective implementation of conventions and standards, such as the UNECE Harmonization Convention or the TIR Convention through awareness-raising and capacity-building workshops and seminars. Stronger links should be established with regional organizations like EurAsEC. The potential and the experience of such organizations should be fully used.

In this context I also want to mention the joint OSCE-UNECE project of developing a Handbook of best practices at border crossings. We should be able to launch the Handbook early next year. I do believe that it will be a useful instrument for promoting the harmonization of border crossing procedures across the region.

Repeated calls were made concerning the necessity to make more efficient the logistic performance of landlocked countries. Setting up logistic centres to provide the proper equipment, required services, effective distribution, and minimize transshipment costs, as well as the use of the UNESCAP model of dry ports have been presented and discussed. Container block trains and vehicle caravans can also be useful instruments to assess the potential of regional transportation systems and also identify gaps and needs for improvement.

Agencies involved in border crossing operations should cooperate and coordinate better both internally and between neighboring countries. Across the region, there are encouraging signs but more remains to be done. Legislation and agreements have to be reflected in the day to day practices.

Another key issue that was highlighted in many sessions was the importance of a public-private partnership approach. Public private partnership can be instrumental in fundraising for regional road infrastructure projects and their coordination. Customs-business partnership, the cooperation and enhanced information exchange with private businesses - the end users - can also lead to an increased efficiency of border crossings and can ensure smoother operations. Regular consultations mechanisms could be envisaged.

Prevention of corruption in customs and border agencies is a key element for ensuring good governance. This can for instance be achieved through simplified, clear and predictable procedures.

Concepts such as authorized economic operator, automatic identification and a verification, one-stop shops at border crossing points, single window, joint controls, electronic data exchange, simplified data transfer, risk analysis, were introduced by speakers and thoroughly discussed. In this regard, the OSCE is also well placed to promote the exchange of experiences and best practices across the region.

Responding to concrete security challenges at borders in Central Asia, including with Afghanistan, addressing challenges posed by illegal activities, trafficking and smuggling, is an important issue which will be further discuss at the Vienna Forum.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our challenge now is to identify the key priorities and the most relevant recommendations for the OSCE. Based on the results of this conference, we shall prepare for the political discussions at the first part of the 18th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, to take place on 1-2 February in Vienna.

Let me express my warmest thanks to all those who contributed to the success of this conference, the Government of Kazakhstan, the OSCE Centre in Astana, the moderators, speakers and rapporteurs, the interpreters, the support staff.

Thank you.