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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALYAKSANDR SYCHOV,  
CHAIRPERSON OF THE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
COMMITTEE OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL AND  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS  
TO THE OSCE, AT THE 2010 OSCE REVIEW CONFERENCE**

Vienna, 26 October 2010

**Economic and environmental dimension (EED)  
Session 7: The way forward and recommendations for future action**

Mr. Chairperson,  
Distinguished Conference participants,

Today marks the close of the economic and environmental segment of the 2010 OSCE Review Conference. Over the last week we have heard some highly interesting and thoughtful discussion on key aspects of the Organization's second basket.

Obviously, it has been impossible to deal at length during the Review Conference with all of the commitments and aspects of the OSCE's activities in the economic and environmental dimension. Nevertheless, it is the first attempt in recent years at a comprehensive discussion of this subject.

A considerable number of specific and interesting proposals and recommendations have been formulated during the sessions, which will be presented by the rapporteurs in the plenary session after lunch.

With regard to the subject of this session, I should like to openly share my own general vision and make some comments about the present situation and future of the second basket with account taken of the discussions during this Review Conference and also my experience in chairing the Economic and Environmental Committee this year.

First, it is gratifying to note that all participating States without exception have come out today in favour of strengthening the economic and environmental dimension as part of the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security. This gives rise to a certain optimism and hope.

On the other hand, it is clear that the OSCE's second basket still suffers from the absence of a clear consensual vision of the future and truly significant practical content and impact.

It must be realized that our dialogue on economic and environmental questions is often quite abstract and theoretical, regardless of the specific topic under consideration. In my opinion, general notions used in discussion of the economic dimension like “intensification”, “strengthening”, “development” or “added value” should always be backed by specific proposals for ways, means and methods of implementing them in practice.

I am firmly convinced in the first place that we need to change our approach to the second basket. It is vital that it be given really serious consideration, otherwise the economic and environmental dimension will remain the Cinderella of the Organization. We need to define what we really want to talk about in the OSCE and what we want to agree on.

If we sincerely wish and aspire to strengthen the economic dimension, our dialogue must include the really important and pressing questions, and we must expand co-operation at the political and expert level in those areas of prime interest for all participating States.

For example, the 1990 Bonn Conference on Economic Co-operation in Europe was attended by the heads of the relevant departments of the participating States. Today there is not even any sense in comparing the former level of participation with the participants in the main OSCE events today in the economic and environmental dimension, despite the fact that year after year in the decisions for the convening of the next OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum we systematically call for representation “at a high level, by senior officials responsible for shaping international economic and environmental policy in the OSCE area”. No further comment is necessary.

In this context I should like to emphasize once again that we need a clear and precise vision of what we want from the economic dimension and what we want to achieve from our joint efforts.

One possible aspect of this vision for development of the second basket on the basis of the Maastricht Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension was formulated in 2009 in a report by the Chairmanship on the future direction of the second dimension. I believe that the progressive implementation of the recommendations contained in that report would help to improve the effectiveness of the economic and environmental dimension. I hope that the adoption in the near future of a decision to synchronize the annual cycle in the economic dimension with the calendar year and to streamline the format for organizing the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum will be only the first step in this direction.

There is a need to further refine the OSCE toolbox in the second basket. There is no doubt that it would be useful to continue to exploit and improve traditional methods and forms of work, such as the holding of thematic conferences and seminars, training and the preparation of various handbooks and teaching aids. At the same time there is also a pressing need to identify possible new instruments and mechanisms and to think outside the box. Quite a number of proposals in this regard have been presented in the framework of the Corfu Process. The leading role played by the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities and his team is also extremely important in this regard.

The allocation of additional human and financial resources to the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities is an indispensable prerequisite for enhancing the OSCE’s work in the second basket and particularly its

analytical capabilities. I hope that the participating States will support the proposals put forward by the Co-ordinator during the discussion of the budget.

I should like to make a few comments on the treatment of the economic dimension in general and its priorities. It might be a good idea to reconsider conducting dialogue in the second basket at a higher level, for example by convening a conference or council of the ministers of economic and environmental affairs of the participating States to discuss the most pressing threats and challenges to economic and environmental security in the OSCE area and also to consider and adopt a Maastricht Plus document, as it is called, the process for which could even be launched as early as the forthcoming Summit in Astana.

As far as the thematic content of the second basket is concerned, I would single out the question of energy security, which is of vital importance for all participating States.

The report presented by the OSCE Secretary General on the complementary role of the OSCE in the field of energy security and the initial discussion of its contents at the Review Conference clearly show that the OSCE does have such a role. Moreover, consensus is being reached on a whole series of considerations detailed in the Secretary General's report.

It seems to me that one practical result of the energy dialogue within the OSCE could be the elaboration of detailed and balanced political principles for our co-operation in the field of energy security that would reconcile the interests of producers, transporters and users of energy. This would give a substantial impetus to future work on the creation and strengthening of an international legal framework for co-operation of this nature.

Mr. Chairperson,

In spite of my relatively critical comments, I am inclined on the whole to be optimistic and confident that the OSCE's economic and environmental dimension will gradually become stronger. Life itself will dictate the need for further active co-operation within the second basket. There are no alternatives.

It is important, however, not simply to react to new threats and challenges but to anticipate and foresee them. This calls for discussion but also specific decisions. We must all demonstrate not only through our words but also through our actions that we are endeavouring to strengthen the economic and environmental dimension and to make it really effective and relevant.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.