

**The 16th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum (Part 1),
Vienna, 28 – 29 January 2008**

**Maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the OSCE area: Increasing security
and protecting the environment**

Keynote address by Mr Kimmo Tiilikainen, Minister of the Environment of Finland

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be here today and take the floor in the opening of the first part of 16th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, to be held in the beautiful city of Vienna.

As already pointed out, the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship Programme for 2008, including the economic and environmental dimension, builds on a comprehensive concept of security. The theme chosen for this year's Forum is "Maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the OSCE area: Increasing security and protecting the environment". With this choice Finland has wanted to focus on a set of issues, which are, in a broad manner, significant to all OSCE participating States.

Achieving common understanding and agreement on concrete objectives and measures concerning environmental protection should help us to promote dialogue and to achieve a common view also in other areas of policy-making. Environment is becoming the forefront of international policy-making and will have a growing bridge-building role. This role, at its best, will contribute towards the consolidation of peace, security and stability in the whole OSCE area and beyond.

The overall theme of this year can be divided into two entities, or looked into from two angles – maritime areas cooperation and inland waterways co-operation.

Finland hosted in September last year the First Preparatory Conference of the Forum, in which the main emphasis of discussion was in maritime areas, the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea, as well as in the sub-regional co-operation attached to their protection and management. This discussion will continue here, and I welcome the wide participation of

various stakeholders, such as international organisations and civil society. This will allow us a productive exchange of ideas, hopefully leading to broadly based conclusions and recommendations.

From Finland's point of view the protection of the Baltic Sea is a top priority. After the September Conference in Helsinki, an important event has taken place in the framework of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission, the Helsinki Commission or HELCOM. After a long preparation and a series of negotiations the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan was adopted in November 2007 in Krakow, Poland, in a ministerial meeting of the Baltic Sea countries and the European Community, all members of HELCOM.

Finland attaches great expectations to the Action Plan, which sets an overall goal of achieving a Baltic Sea in good environmental status by 2021. The main problem areas of the Baltic Sea are thoroughly addressed in the Action Plan, namely eutrophication, hazardous substances, biodiversity and maritime activities, including the safety of maritime transport. With regard to the eutrophication the Action Plan proposes country-wise annual nutrient input reduction targets for both nitrogen and phosphorus.

I believe that the Baltic Sea cooperation, in many respects, and the Action Plan as its latest outcome, can be observed as a source of inspiration to other organizations and cooperation frameworks addressing similar challenges. The present situation in the Baltic Sea cooperation, also in light of the Action Plan, will be shared with you by the HELCOM Executive Secretary in her presentation tomorrow.

Cooperation on the Baltic Sea as well as on other regional seas is anchored to the agreement structures within the International Maritime Organization, IMO. The role of the IMO is decisive in all central fields of maritime policies, including the environmental protection. I wish to thank IMO already now for collaboration in developing the thematic discussion in this Forum. As mentioned, concrete forms of cooperation could be sought, for example, in the case of combating the threat posed by invasive species spreading with ballast water. The Baltic Sea States look forward to continued good cooperation with IMO also in the future to reach HELCOM targets dealing with ship-borne waste water releases and winter navigation matters.

Among other policy tools and instruments highly relevant to the Baltic Sea cooperation we should mention the EU instruments such as the Marine Strategy and the future Maritime Policy. Russia, for its part is showing an active interest in Baltic Sea Cooperation, and we look forward to the Russian Chairmanship in HELCOM.

Mr. Chairman,

Already in this first part of the Forum a further step will be taken to discuss inland waterways co-operation. We are assisted by a number of knowledgeable organizations, such as the UNECE, which has a very important role in this field. The UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes has proved to be an important framework for improved management of shared waters.

The concept 'Integrated Water Resources Management' and the planning tools developed to support this holistic approach have a special meaning in the eastern part of the OSCE area. The environmental strategies of the Caucasus and the Central Asia are to a great extent centered to water management, and there is a necessity to solve related transboundary questions.

The Second Preparatory Conference, scheduled to take place in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan in March and to be followed by the second part of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum in Prague in May, will allow a thorough discussion on the topics specific to these regions, including hopefully a more thorough discussion on the Caspian region and Central Asia. Water transport and co-operation related to water transport, regional aspects of security and the environment, binding together seas, lakes canals and rivers, can be elaborated within the theme. The specific issues raised by the landlocked states will be of course addressed as well.

I am particularly pleased about the active participation of the Eastern Europe, South-Caucasian and Central Asian countries in the work of the Economic and Environmental Forum.

Mr. Chairman, some words about the general objectives of the economic and environmental dimension of the OSCE.

Already a first look into the existing organizations, co-operation frameworks, conventions and international processes related to economic and environmental co-operation in the OSCE area leads us to ask, where and how the OSCE could be best placed to bring missing aspects and added value into the co-operation.

The purpose and the domain of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum is to address security-related, environmental and economic aspects and their interlinkages in the given context. This broadly defined mandate, although demanding, provides a special opportunity.

One of the key objectives is to contribute to achieving increased awareness and coordination within the existing frameworks. Of particular importance is the increased political commitment at a high decision making level as well as in a multi-stakeholder context. The Forum brings together relevant stakeholders in the OSCE area: the 56 OSCE participating States, the Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation and also international organizations, as well as representatives of civil society, business and the scientific communities.

When the environmental aspects were brought into the work of the OSCE, late 1990's, the need for a shared political commitment was identified as a prerequisite to resolving or tackling environmental issues. Although the general understanding of the importance of these issues has thereafter constantly increased, there are new challenges requiring data collection, awareness building and new capacities.

To mention the main challenge: climate change requires attention by all and at all decision-making levels in terms of combating, mitigation and adaptation. The specific role of the OSCE is to deal with the impact of climate change on security. I am pleased that climate change has already been addressed in the context of this years' theme of the Economic and Environmental Forum. The relevance of observing climate change will further increase in the remaining part of the work.

The mandate of the Forum allows addressing development and use of economic instruments in promoting environmental protection. While the macro-economic data supports the observation that environmental protection and economic development are mutually supportive, there is a long way to go to implement the legislation-based and voluntary economic instruments to this end in practice. In this sphere, the work of the OSCE in supporting the implementation of international environmental agreements is relevant and valuable.

The mandate of the Forum to look into security and environmental issues together with economic issues should encompass attention to effectiveness of investments and use of natural resources in a sustainable way. In numerous cases a conflict or a risk of a conflict has led to decisions, which result in overlapping investments, wastage of resources and putting unnecessary burden on the environment. We need to do more to address environmental risks and challenges. In addition responses need to be comprehensive. Confidence-building among stakeholders helps to create and implement environmentally sound policies.

Finally, I would like to refer to the field missions of the OSCE as a yet another strength of the economic and environmental dimension of the organization. The expertise of the field missions helps to exchange information and to network with other organizations. The OSCE can add resources and its contacts with the local administrations to facilitate the implementation of national and regional projects. A good example of this, to mention just one, is the comprehensive Environmental and Security Initiative, ENVSEC, implemented by OSCE in collaboration with the UNEP and the UNDP and a number of other organisations.

To conclude and to summarise, Mr. Chairman, I see the process of the 16th Economic and Environmental Forum being conducted as a part of a wider regional and international effort. The OSCE looks forward to working together and coordinating with other organizations to provide added value. In addition we see possibilities for the OSCE to lend political support and political energy to other initiatives but also possibilities for reciprocal support from other organisations to OSCE initiatives. I hope this Vienna Segment of the Economic and Environmental Forum will contribute to such results.

On behalf of the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship I wish you all fruitful and productive discussion during the next two days at this important Forum. I am convinced that the results of the Economic and Environmental Forum will substantially contribute to Helsinki Ministerial meeting next December.

Thank you Mr. Chairman