

Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

ENGLISH only

14th Economic Forum
Prague, 24 May 2006**EU Closing Statement**

1. The European Union thanks the Belgian Chairmanship, the Secretary General of the OSCE, the Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities and the OSCE staff for having organised such a well attended and inspiring conference, including the side events with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation and for the presentation of the handbooks on business and investment climate and labour migration. We would also like to thank our Czech hosts for their warm hospitality.
2. As the review session and a number of interventions confirmed, the OSCE can play an important role in the promotion of the wider acceptance and implementation of international legal instruments. We are convinced that this role should continue to be played in the framework of OSCE-UNECE cooperation as defined by the Memorandum of Understanding. The progress made on the ongoing "Pilot Project" encourages us to believe that it would be possible to further develop the cooperation with the UNECE and other international partner organisations. We look forward to the results of the Pilot Project and to further discussing a joint OSCE-UNECE action plan.
3. The EU reiterates that useful work can be done in deepening regional cooperation and in assisting landlocked countries and regions in overcoming their transport problems. In this respect, the EU welcomes the prospect of deepening cooperation with the UN under the Almaty Programme of Action, especially given the request put forward jointly by the countries of Central Asia at the Economic Forum.
4. The European Union has greatly appreciated the presentations of the speakers, highlighting the strategic importance of transport development to enhance regional economic cooperation and stability with a special emphasis on cooperation in specific regions. We share the view that the key contribution of the OSCE lies in facilitating dialogue which aims at raising awareness and creating political will to overcome obstacles in the development of transport activities.
5. Efficient and secure transport requires good public and corporate governance and strong institutions at all levels. These are essential foundations for a sound economy, to reduce poverty and inequality, to increase social integration and opportunities for all. In this respect we note with interest the proposals to hold public-private round tables in specific areas. The EU has a number of relevant instruments and is willing to share its experience in this field with interested partners.

6. The EU fully supports the OSCE Border Security and Management Concept adopted last year in Ljubljana, and will actively promote its implementation.
7. We believe that public-private partnerships contribute to, and complement the implementation of commitments undertaken by participating States. The EU welcomes the fact that very concrete proposals have been put forward during this Forum. The EU looks forward to engaging in the process of identifying areas in the field of transport where the OSCE can provide added value, such as good governance, transport security and combating all forms of trafficking, such as in human beings, in drugs and illicit trafficking of SALW. This could include awareness raising, capacity building, exchange of information as well as reinforcing dialogue and cooperation with partner organisations, international financial institutions and the business community.
8. In this regard, the EU wishes to stress the importance of the initiative put forward by France on the fight against the illicit air transport of SALW and their ammunitions in the OSCE area. The EU fully supports the objective of this proposal which is fully consistent with the OSCE cross-dimensional approach to security and based on voluntary cooperation between participating States. The EU looks forward to discussing it further with a view to possibly adopting a decision on the subject at the next OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Brussels.
9. As the final session has clearly shown transportation cannot be developed without considering its impact on the environment. The European Union believes that a comprehensive approach is needed to advance and strengthen the interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development, i.e. economic development, social development and environmental protection.
10. During recent years the European Union has seen with satisfaction the OSCE Second Dimension developing considerably. The present Economic Forum is further proof of the implementation of the Maastricht Strategy in a particularly important area. We reiterate our support to the efforts to stimulate the political dialogue on the role of transport in furthering and maintaining peace and security.
11. Finally, the European Union would like to welcome the theme "Key challenges to ensure environmental security and sustainable development in the OSCE area: land degradation, soil contamination and water management" proposed by the incoming Spanish Chairmanship for the 15th Economic Forum. We hope that a decision with regard to the theme can be reached as soon as possible.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, EFTA country Norway, a member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

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