

**717th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
19 June 2008**

**Statement
by Bernard Snoy
Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities**

**Mr. Chairman,
Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great honour for me to address today the Permanent Council and to share with you some reflections on the 16th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum process, which culminated in Prague with the Forum's second part from the 19th to the 21st of May.

I would like to do that, having in mind the Ministerial Council Decision No. 10/04 on "Improving the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Economic Forum" as well as the experience of the 14th Economic Forum process under Belgian Chairmanship and of the 15th Economic and Environmental Forum process, under Spanish Chairmanship, to the planning, implementation and follow-up of which I have been personally deeply involved in my capacity as Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities. I do that also having in mind the many discussions we have had in the Economic and Environmental Committee, which have given us guidance and very useful elements of evaluation and constructive suggestions.

As we all know, the EEF is the most important event organised annually under the OSCE second dimension. As a Forum bringing together high-level representatives from governments, the civil society and the business community of the OSCE participating States, as well as from international organizations, it aims at giving political impetus to the dialogue on "potential security risks stemming, wholly or in part, from economic, social and environmental factors". Forum participants are expected to exchange views and identify practical solutions to specific issues related to the theme proposed by the Chairmanship and agreed upon by the participating States. The Forum is also expected to review each year the implementation of part of the participating States commitments in the economic and environmental area. The Forum has to be structured in such a way as to contribute to recommendations, including possible decisions, and to follow-up activities having a practical positive impact on the security and well-being of populations in the OSCE region.

How successful has been the 16th Economic and Environmental Forum process been towards achieving these objectives?

This year's theme, under Finnish Chairmanship, was, as you know, "Maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the OSCE area: Increasing security and protecting the environment". The Forum process included two preparatory conferences, held in Helsinki, on 10-11 September 2007 (SEC/GAL/191/07), and in Ashgabad, on 6-7 March 2008 (SEC.GAL/67/08/Corr.1), and two sessions of the Forum held respectively in Vienna on 28-29 January 2008 (EEF.GAL/3/08/Rev.1) and in Prague on 19-21 May 2008 (EEF.GAL/10/08 Rev.1).

Although the 16th Forum process is by no means completed, as we expect a number of follow-up activities, my preliminary assessment of the Forum process is that, by and large, the Forum is on the way to achieve its objectives. I would like to stress particularly six points.

1. the 16th Forum has demonstrated the relevance of the theme selected from a security point of view;
2. the political dialogue in the Forum's framework has been particularly successful in terms of sharing of experiences and in fostering inter-regional co-operation;
3. the Forum has drawn attention to the security implications of implementing international commitments in the areas covered by the Forum process;
4. the Forum has been successful in stimulating the participation of the civil society and the business community in the high-level dialogue on the topic chosen and in encouraging innovative cooperation between multiple actors on complex security issues;
5. the 16th Forum process has provided for continuity with the two preceding Forum processes; and, last but not least,
6. the Forum process has generated a list of meaningful ongoing and proposed follow-up activities.

1. Relevance of the theme

At each stage of the Forum process, the relevance of maritime and inland waterways co-operation has been highlighted in terms of increasing security and protecting the environment in the OSCE area. Furthermore, the process has raised awareness not only on the importance of the security and environmental issues in relation to maritime and inland waterways co-operation but also on the potential crucial role the OSCE could play in mobilizing the political will in participating States to address these issues more forcefully. Another relevant issue to which the 16th Forum drew attention was the specific challenges in the areas of transport and transit as well as in transboundary water management faced by the landlocked countries, particularly in Central Asia.

2. Quality of the high-level dialogue and support to regional and inter-regional co-operation

The Forum process was successful in terms of the number (up to 400 at the second session in Prague) and level of participants and in terms of the quality of the policy debate it stimulated among them. There was a good inter-action between keynote speakers, representatives of participating States and other participants. Among others, the discussions highlighted the need for interagency co-operation and for an integrated approach linking various conventions relevant for maritime and inland waterways co-operation in order to find better synergies. The Forum process emphasized that maritime and transboundary water issues are most efficiently addressed by using a regional and sub-regional approach and that the OSCE, as a political organisation, could be instrumental in further promoting and supporting sub-regional, regional and inter-regional co-operation. Examples were provided in the Forum process of emerging or potential co-operation between regional co-operation processes such as the Baltic Maritime Environmental Commission (HELCOM), the Black Sea Commission, the Framework Convention on Protection of the Marine Environment in the Caspian Sea (Tehran Convention) and the Caspian Environmental Programme. It was suggested that the OSCE could act as a political platform to enhance such co-operation and also facilitate training and capacity building activities, using also the OSCE field offices in the region.

3. Implementation of Commitments

The traditional review session in Prague focussed on commitments related to governance and transport issues, with a special focus on environmental governance and transport security, including relevant international conventions and international co-operation initiatives. Both

the UNECE, our traditional partner in this endeavour, and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), the leading Organisation in the area of maritime co-operation, submitted substantial inputs that were discussed in Prague. The representative of UNECE made the Forum participants aware of the existing UN regulatory framework, administered by the UNECE, for all types of transport (sea, air, road, rail and waterways) in place to mitigate the risks posed by the transport of dangerous goods and outlined specific recommendations for an OSCE role in helping participating States in acceding to some of the existing instruments, harmonizing consequently their national legislation and implementing these instruments. The IMO representative called on the OSCE to stimulate the accession of its participating States to other key international IMO treaties and conventions dealing with the prevention and combating of terrorism or with environmental protection liability and security. A further potential role was seen for the OSCE in promoting political discussion to bring regional partners together, assist in harmonizing standards and customs practices and contribute best practices in helping States reform their legislation and administration.

4. Partnership with business community, academia, civil society and international organisations

The 16th forum process opened new avenues for partnerships between various stakeholders in addressing multifaceted aspects of maritime and inland waterways security. The Forum was successful in eliciting, at its successive stages, the sustained interest of representatives of the business community. I have particularly in mind the Oil Spill Preparedness Regional Initiative (OSPRI), a group of energy companies that have implemented a series of actions regarding oil spill preparedness and response through a regional initiative covering the Caspian Sea, the Black Sea and Central Asia. Particularly in difficult areas such as the Caspian Sea, the stakeholders saw the OSCE as a potential facilitator for regional co-operation.

5. Continuity with preceding forum processes

The 16th EEF is an excellent example of the continuity and coherence sought by the Finnish Chairmanship in implementing its OSCE Chairmanship in 2008. The 16th Forum built indeed on the foundations set by two previous Fora: the Forum in 2006, under Belgian Chairmanship, which dealt with transport development and security, and the Forum in 2007, under Spanish Chairmanship, which focussed on sustainable development as well as on environment and security. Coherence was also achieved through an integrated approach of the set of economic, environmental and security issues involved in maritime and inland waterways co-operation. The Forum involved and its follow-up will continue to involve closer co-operation between units in the Secretariat, including the OCEEA, the ATU, the CPC, the Borders Unit as well as Field Operations.

6. Proposed Follow-up Activities delivering practical benefits

My Office circulated a few days ago a “List of ongoing/proposed follow-up activities to the 16th OSCE EEF” (SEC.GAL/111/08). This list was compiled in close co-operation with the Finnish Chairmanship on the basis of the recommendations formulated during the 16th EEF process. These activities cover a broad range and offer the perspective of demonstrating, through their concrete results, the validity of the recommendations formulated during the 16th EEF process. These activities are grouped in three categories:

a) Already planned activities. These include

- the Chairmanship Conference on “The Safety of Navigation and Environmental Security in a Transboundary Context in the Black Sea Basin”, which will take place next week in Odessa. The main aim of the conference will be to enhance co-operation in the region, facilitate the exchange of experience, identify current

challenges and contribute to integrating efforts towards a more effective implementation of international and regional conventions;

- Two initiatives in the areas of oil spills preparedness and response: a specific project for the OSCE participating States in the Caspian Region aimed at building oil spill response capacities and a project proposal developed by the OSCE Mission to Georgia consisting in a capacity building workshop on oil spill preparedness and response for mid- and high-level officials who would be involved in a response in case of an incident;
- the elaboration of a “Handbook on Best Practices at Border Crossings”, to assist participating States, in particular the landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbours, in developing more efficient border and customs policies. The Handbook would be developed in close co-operation with the UNECE, the WCO and other partner organisations. While it is expected to become in the first place a tool for governments, the Handbook also would target representatives of transport agencies, the business community and the civil society.

b) Possible further follow-up activities and areas. This includes

- Strengthening co-operation with relevant international and regional organisations: pilot co-operation projects could be designed with the UNECE in the area of transport of dangerous goods and with the IMO in the area of maritime environmental security; other potential projects could be designed with partner organisations around themes such as resilience, integrated supply chain security, combating piracy, collecting data and monitoring the implementation, at national level, of relevant maritime security related legal instruments;
- projects enhancing awareness of the links between climate change and maritime and inland waterways transportation; and
- concrete projects related to inland waterways co-operation, particularly in Eastern Europe (e.g. Dniester basin, Pripjat river and Dnieper-Bug canal) and in Central Asia (e.g. assessment work in the Amu-Darya river basin)

c) Actions requiring political decisions: In this section, we have placed a possible Ministerial Council Decision in Helsinki, on the basis of the recommendations of the 16th EEF and focussing on follow-up actions, as well as the possible conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the IMO, along similar lines as the existing MoU with the UNECE. For this category of follow-up activities, we defer to the judgment of the Finnish Chairmanship.

**Mr. Chairman,
Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In conclusion, I would like to share with you some thoughts about the future of the Economic and Environmental Forum process.

First of all, I think it would be beneficial to apply to the Forum process a multi-year perspective, based on an identification of the most important themes under the OSCE second dimension, for which this type of structured high-level dialogue, carefully prepared by expert conferences, would be particularly suited. I am pleased to hear that the informal quintet ministerial meeting, which took place in Helsinki on 1-2 June 2008, supported the general notions of identification of strategic priorities and development of multi-year planning. My suggestion would be to extent this approach to the Forum process. In this connection, I find it particularly welcome that the theme proposed by the incoming Chairmanship for the 17th EEF builds upon the important

migration topic of the 13th Economic Forum, under Slovenian Chairmanship, approaching it from an innovative angle that takes into account developments in recent years.

Second, the future of the Forum process has to be seen in the broader context of the future of the OSCE second dimension. In this connection, I take the liberty to draw your attention to the OCEEA Action Plan for 2008 (SEC.GAL/37/08), which was presented and received general support at the meeting of the Economic and Environmental Committee on 12 February 2008. In this document, my Office clarified its priorities on the basis of clear criteria, in particular of added value and explicit of link with the OSCE security and conflict prevention mandate. On the basis of this Action Plan, a definite streamlining of the OSCE activities under the Economic and Environmental Dimension is taking place. Our activities are being regrouped around two main themes, namely, on one side, good governance and on the other side, improvement of the investment climate, environment and security and environmental co-operation, while further activities continue on three other themes for which Ministerial Council Decisions have given a clear mandate to the Secretariat, namely labour migration, transport dialogue and energy security dialogue. All these activities are taking place in close co-operation with other units within the OSCE Secretariat, our field presences and our many partners, in particular among international organisations. There were some voices at the conclusion on the 16th EEF suggesting to pursue the debate on the strategic priorities of OSCE activities under the second dimension. My Office is fully open to these suggestions and proposes to base this debate on the orientations we have already tabled in that Action Plan for 2008 as well as in the more recent 2009 Programme Outline, redefined in a multi-year perspective, in view of further enhancing our effectiveness in implementing the OSCE mandate under its second dimension.

I thank you for your attention.