

**Second Preparatory Conference
for the 16th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum
“Maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the OSCE area:
Increasing security and protecting the environment”**

Ashgabat, 6-7 March 2008

Introductory Remarks

by Ambassador Aleksi Härkönen, Head of the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship Task Force

Your Excellency Minister Meredov,
Mr. Moderator,
Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Foreign Minister Ilkka Kanerva, I would like to extend a sincere thanks and appreciation to the Government of Turkmenistan for taking the initiative to host this Conference on “Maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the OSCE area: Increasing security and protecting the environment”. The Finnish Chairmanship regards the invitation by Turkmenistan a most welcome sign of its determination to increase its international cooperation and utilize the opportunities provided by the OSCE in its relations with other participating States.

I would like to pay tribute to H.E. Rashid Meredov, Minister for Foreign Affairs for his most interesting introductory message.

Finland finds it important that the 16th Economic and Environmental Forum and its preparatory Conferences are conducted in the spirit of good-neighbourly relations between OSCE participating States, aiming to develop wider regional and international initiatives to tackle our common challenges. I am delighted that we can now benefit from the special perspectives provided by the regions of Central Asia, the Caspian Sea as well as the Mediterranean on maritime and inland waterways cooperation.

The geographic position of the landlocked countries can be challenging, as transport and logistics are key elements of trade and economic development. These crucial questions were also addressed during the Belgian OSCE Chairmanship in 2006 and its follow-up activities, as well as during the Spanish Chairmanship last year. The Finnish Chairmanship appreciates the interest of the landlocked participating States to use the OSCE as forum for debate. I look forward to the session on situation of the landlocked countries and hope that our discussions will give guidance for the future activities of the OSCE.

With the help of the OSCE participating States and specialized regional organizations, we are building a more comprehensive view of the subject matter. We are mapping the problems of maritime and inland waterways cooperation in the OSCE area in order to tackle the problems and to exchange best practices and experiences. By taking into account security and environmental concerns as well as economic aspects we should be able to address these issues as they exist in reality. Our work benefits from the wide participation of various stakeholders including the 56 participating States, international organizations, academia, private enterprises and non-governmental organizations.

We are living in a world where the tendency is towards globalization and increased interdependency. This has been clearly shown by developments in international trade as well as by emerging challenges to security and the environment. Sustainable development is built on all of these aspects. It is also built on the good governance of our material and human resources.

In this connection I would like to raise the issue of climate change as a growing global environmental concern. It may have a serious impact on human activities. It may soon alter priorities in international cooperation. Widespread shortage of water, raising sea levels, increased flooding and prolonged draughts need to be addressed urgently by all states, not only by those affected first.

In order to be useful in these efforts the OSCE must provide added value. First of all we should look into possibilities of the OSCE to raise political awareness and lend its support to the work of specialized organizations. Secondly we should look at the OSCE's own possibilities for action. I would like to thank the OSCE Field Operations for engaging in useful economic and environmental projects, often in close coordination with other international actors and in good cooperation with the governments of the host countries. The OSCE should pay particular attention to training and capacity building projects, which also often top the wish lists of host governments.

When discussing the activities of OSCE field presences I would like to underline the special character of OSCE cooperation. It is based on a comprehensive concept of security, which includes cooperation in politico-military, economic and environmental as well as human dimension issues. The participating States would do well to make use of the wide range of opportunities available to them.

The support of the EU is particularly important for the work of the OSCE. I am pleased with the good cooperation between the OSCE and the EU and look forward to Ambassador Pierre Morel's keynote address this morning.

I wish to end by thanking, on behalf of the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship, the Government of Turkmenistan for providing the participants of the Conference with excellent facilities for deliberations and for all the wonderful expressions of hospitality that we have already experienced. I would also like to thank the Secretary General, Ambassador Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, Mr. Bernard Snoy and his team for their contribution in preparing the Conference. Finally I would like to thank Ambassador Ibrahim Djikic, Head of the OSCE Center and his team for making this Conference a priority in their activities here in Turkmenistan.