

Your Excellencies,
Dear Secretary General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Kazakh OSCE Chairmanship I would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Belarus for hosting the second preparatory Conference for the 18th Economic and Environmental Forum of the OSCE.

I congratulate the organizers for preparing such an interesting agenda, for bringing together such an impressive list of speakers and participants, and for all their efforts for a smooth and pleasant set up of our meeting. A sincere “thank you” goes to Mr. Goran Svilanovic, Co-ordinator of the Economic and Environmental Activities, and his able staff, as well as to Ambassador Benedikt Haller and his team at the OSCE Office in Minsk.

This conference is part of the broader process of the 18th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum - “Promoting good governance at border crossings, improving the security of land transportation and facilitating international transport by road and rail in the OSCE region”.

So far, the first preparatory Conference in October 2009 in Astana as well as the first part of the Forum in February in Vienna focused mainly on road transport facilitation, landlocked developing countries issues and on good governance in customs and at border crossings. Complementing that, this second preparatory Conference puts a stronger emphasis on other building blocks of this year’s Forum’s theme, namely the security of the international transport circuit, railways transportation, and the links between transport and the environment.

I will not attempt to propose myself solutions to the complex and challenging tasks encapsulated in the very theme of this year’s Forum. I would just like to raise a number of questions that I believe are relevant for our discussion over the next two days.

- What are the vulnerabilities of land transport from a security perspective ? How can we make transport more secure while remaining cost-efficient and competitive ? What are the preconditions to ensure secure and sustainable transport operations ?

- What should be the responsibilities and roles of all those involved in transport operations and how could the OSCE contribute to strengthening co-operation at all levels ? How can we, together, contribute to an effective implementation of commonly agreed standards or instruments ?

- How can we fully utilize the potential of railway transportation in the OSCE region, in particular in landlocked countries such as my own country or our host country, Belarus ? What can be done to facilitate railway transportation and what are the specific measures or procedures that should be adopted and implemented in this sector ?
- What can be done to address the concerns linked to environment ?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With its membership of 56 participating States and its broad security mandate, the OSCE is well placed to identify and address political problems and contribute to the ongoing international efforts in this field. In doing so, the OSCE would not duplicate existing efforts and initiatives.

The Kazakh Chairmanship sees the OSCE as a promoter of political dialogue, a platform for networking between stakeholders, for discussing relevant issues and suggesting follow up actions. The OSCE should also be a catalyst for action when and where needed.

The conclusions of this Conference in Minsk, along with the ideas and recommendations that have resulted from our past meetings, will pave the way towards the second part of the Forum, on 24-26 May, in Prague. The Kazakh Chairmanship hopes that this Conference will be instrumental in that regard.

We hope that the conference will be useful as an exchange of best practices, where we can all learn from each other.

Thank you