



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

THE 18th OSCE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

- PART I, VIENNA, 1-2 FEBRUARY 2010 -

**Opening Remarks by Goran Svilanovic
Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities**

Dear Ambassador,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the PC decision on the theme of the 18th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum was adopted, my Office together with the Kazakh Chairmanship for 2010 embarked on the preparatory process. I wish to express my gratitude to the Kazakh Chairmanship for its excellent co-operation and support. A first preparatory Conference was successfully organised in Astana in October 2009. It provided substantial input for this Forum meeting in Vienna and helped us to identify the most relevant issues that we are now proposing for your deliberation.

As the Secretary General has pointed out, the OSCE has already a proven track record in dealing with transport and border-related matters. A first exercise that we undertook when we started the preparations for this Forum was therefore to take stock and analyze our previous work.

Indeed, my Office and the OSCE field presences have been actively working on these issues, in particular since the 14th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum in 2006. The approach taken has been based on multiple pillars, such as the implementation of relevant regulatory documents, the promotion of good governance, regional co-operation, providing support to landlocked developing countries, transit transportation development, public-private dialogue.

A number of awareness raising as well as capacity building activities have been implemented. The most recent ones include a seminar on "Strengthening Co-operation at Railway Border Crossings in Central Asia" in July of 2009 in Balkanabat, Turkmenistan. In November of last year my Office, with the support of the Government of Georgia, held a regional seminar in Batumi, Georgia, on the promotion of good governance and fighting corruption in the area of transport infrastructure development. In December in Tashkent, my Office jointly with the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan and the Uzbek authorities organised a regional Round Table on Supporting the Development of a Regional Transport Programme.

Thinking about our future work on transport issues I recall an article which I read recently. There are interesting opinions expressed in it by representatives of business associations from Central Asia. I would quote some of them:

"Vehicles traveling through Central Asia often proceed at a snail's pace, moving at an average speed of 30 kph."

"There are too many controlling bodies at the borders that do nothing but sell stamps. Total time spent at a border often exceeds 20 hours."

These business people were not only complaining about the situation. They were also offering solutions. I quote again:

"The only way out of the dilemma is for governments, the private sector and the international community to work together in overcoming these obstacles"

This is precisely what the OSCE has been trying to do by devoting increased attention to multi stakeholder co-operation in this crucial area. For the past years we have engaged with a number of partners – international, regional, governmental and private sector organizations, many of them being present here today.

During this year's Forum process we should strive to increase the effectiveness of our co-operation. It is my conviction that the OSCE can be a catalyst for creating networks of innovative international co-operation on transport.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our Forum should facilitate a meaningful and future oriented dialogue among the participating States. Its recommendations could later on be translated into concrete activities aimed at providing solutions to some pressing problems.

Based on the recommendations of the Astana preparatory conference, we may envisage focusing on the harmonization of border crossing procedures across the region, advocating a public-private partnership approach and supporting co-operation and enhanced information exchange between state agencies and private businesses - the end users, as well as addressing corruption in customs and border agencies as a key element of promoting good governance. Responding to threat to security posed by illegal activities, trafficking and smuggling, is yet another issue of primary importance which will be further discussed during the next two days.

In defining our future priorities, I very much count on the input that our OSCE field presences and the Economic and Environmental Officers can provide. Due to their expertise, local knowledge and local networking, and due to their dedication and commitment, they are invaluable to us.

Concluding, I wish to express my gratitude to all the guest speakers and participants for joining us here and for agreeing to take an active part in our discussions. I wish all of us a really productive, result oriented meeting.