

**Welcoming Remarks by Mr. Arunas Štaras,
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19TH OSCE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

“Promotion of common actions and co-operation in the OSCE area in the fields of
development of sustainable energy and transport”

SECOND PREPARATORY MEETING

(DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT)

4-5 April 2011, Druskininkai, Lithuania,

Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

It gives me a great pleasure on behalf of the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania to welcome you to this second preparatory meeting of the 19th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, today’s meeting is focused on the development of sustainable transport, it is the area upon which OSCE puts considerable effort and attention.

It is widely acknowledged that implementation of sustainable transport development is a major challenge in the transport sector and makes a positive contribution to the environmental, social and economic development of the communities in many countries.

Good news is that despite OSCE comprehensive approach to security, it also pays strong concern towards economic and environmental matters. Recognizing that co-operation in these areas can contribute to peace, prosperity and stability.

Transport is an essential component of the European economy. The transport industry at large accounts for about 7% of GDP and for over 5% of total employment in the European Union. In Lithuania, transport sector contributed by more than 10% to GDP in 2010.

What we see today is that the relationship between globalization and transport volumes is complex because of many reasons. Rising incomes, more leisure time, new technologies and the ageing of the population are just a few examples of trends that will influence the future development of the transport sector in terms of both freight and passenger transport.

Therefore, those changes are likely to demand greater transport safety, security and comfort, while the growth of traffic and urban environmental tension risks working in the opposite direction.

Owing to this complexity, any intervention on the transport sector must be based on a long-term vision for the sustainable transport development. Consequently a new technology development and effective policy implementation may offer new opportunities to achieve a more balanced sustainable development of the transport sector.

In this regard, there is an urgent need to address aspects related to the promotion of sustainable transport, such as the role of policies enhancing innovation and technologies for environmentally friendly transportation choices, the facilitation of international land transport and the integration of transport networks.

Let me also underline that this meeting in many dimensions is a follow-up of the last year Kazakh's chairmanship, which focused on the promotion of good governance at border crossings, improving the security of land transportation, and the facilitation of international transport by road and rail. Lithuania considers transport issue as extreme importance for all countries within the framework of the OSCE. Taking over chairmanship this year, Lithuania continues to follow the issue of transport as one of top priorities in the agenda.

Situated on the coast of the Baltic Sea and on the Eastern border of the European Union, Lithuania is in a favourable geographical position to provide maritime as well as hinterland transport services to the EU and CIS markets. Well-developed Lithuanian rail, road and maritime transport infrastructure provides North-South and East-West connections. These directions are the most important for trade with Central and Western Europe, Russia and even China.

According to the Eurostat, Lithuania was among top three countries of the European Union having the biggest contribution of transport to national economies. In this context, transport is one of the most rapidly developing economic sectors in our country.

Development of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) is one of the main priorities of Lithuanian transport sector innovation. In general, it has been proved that in certain cases ITS can: reduce travelling time, pollution, the number of delays and decrease the number of fatalities on roads. ITS also provides the possibilities to improve public transport competitiveness.

Moreover, by the end of this year, we are planning to launch a national database, which will contain real-time information on weather, traffic and accidents on national roads. The information will be available for public use and for commercial purposes.

Furthermore, Lithuanian Government is ready to support the development of electric cars through targeted policies and financial instruments. These measures can be part of the deal with the private investor. In the short term, the Ministry of Transport and Communications is planning to launch a comprehensive study in order to evaluate all possible scenarios for promotion of the electric mobility.

Other priority issue is the road safety programme, which aims to make Lithuania one of the safest places in Europe for traffic participants. In recent years, Lithuania has been near the very bottom of European Union road safety rankings. Lithuania intends to bring about a dramatic change of the situation and has set itself the goal of being a "Top-10" country in terms of road safety.

Definitely some of already mentioned goals are very challenging, however I believe they are truly achievable with hard work and high motivation.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion let me welcome you all again to the OSCE meeting of the development of sustainable transport. Let us have inspiring discussions and identify new pathways for a sustainable future.

I am confident that our joint commitment to general cooperation will contribute towards building a better future to our countries. I believe you will have a most productive and rewarding meeting.

Thank you very much for your attention.