

11.9.2007

ENGLISH only

*The First Preparatory Conference to the Sixteenth OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum
"Maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the OSCE area: Increasing security and protecting the environment"
Helsinki, 10-11 September 2007*

Closing debate: the role of the OSCE
Ambassador Antti Turunen, Permanent Representative of Finland to the OSCE

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to make some concluding remarks at the end of the First Preparatory Conference to the Sixteenth OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum.

First of all, I would like to thank all the speakers for their excellent presentations which have stimulated debate. I would also like to thank all the moderators for their effort to steer discussion, as well as the rapporteurs for their valuable work. Last but not least I would like to thank you all for contributing to interesting and lively discussion and to the successful start of the 16th EEF.

I would like to emphasize the continuity and thank the present and previous Chairmanship for their support to the Conference.

We have now taken the first step. There will be many steps in the process. The future process and input from all of you will define the final outcome of the Forum. However, at this stage I would like to make some general points on the basis of the deliberations of these two days.

In my view, this Preparatory Conference has confirmed the relevance of the theme (*"Maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the OSCE area: Increasing security and protecting the environment"*).

I think the discussion has clearly highlighted that the security of waterways is a pressing matter that requires urgent action. It has also been underlined that environmental problems are increasing and becoming more complex and severe. I don't think that the trend can be reversed if the risks are not analyzed thoroughly and counter-measures defined together.

The need for enhanced co-operation at all stages and between various actors has come up in many presentations. The importance of policy integration and close coordination between different authorities has also been stressed. I think that the OSCE is well-placed to raise awareness in this respect and contribute to the better understanding of challenges. The OSCE could help to find solutions to problems. The OSCE could mobilize political will. The OSCE could work in the area of capacity building. Many have pointed out that the OSCE could contribute to the implementation of existing norms and standards in the area of maritime safety and security as well as environmental protection. The OSCE could also encourage participating States to accede to and implement relevant conventions.

As has been stressed before, the OSCE has its own political profile among international organizations. The OSCE can use its network to promote dialogue and build bridges between policy-makers and experts of participating States as well as between various other stakeholders, such as international organizations like IMO and UNECE, private enterprises, academia, and NGOs. I think that is exactly what we have done here in Helsinki. It will be important to continue the dialogue.

I would also like to stress the important role the OSCE field presences will play in the context of the theme. We just heard how the theme looks from the perspective of one field presence.

Like Secretary General Perrin de Brichambaut has mentioned, the incoming Chairmanship together with the OCEEA will carefully reflect on the outcome of this Conference and will come back to these ideas at a later stage.

How do we continue from here? In Vienna we will build upon the discussions and recommendations of this Helsinki Preparatory Conference. The geographical focus will be the same, in other words we will continue examining especially the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea and the inland waterways. The Second Preparatory Conference in Ashgabat in March 2008 will continue addressing the topic with a focus on the Caspian Sea, the Mediterranean and the landlocked countries. The Prague segment will build upon the deliberations of Ashgabat but will also draw general conclusions in the context of the 16th EEF. The agreed set of commitments will also be reviewed in Prague.

I commend the effort of the Economic and Environmental Coordinator to convene members responsible for economic and environmental questions in the missions to an internal meeting here in Helsinki starting tomorrow. I would encourage them to come up with ideas for projects and other activities for next year.

With these ideas I would now like to turn to some preliminary conclusions of the conference:

- 1) The OSCE plays a key role in mobilizing political will in participating States to address security and environmental issues in relation to maritime and inland waterways co-operation
- 2) As a facilitator, the OSCE lends its support to the work done within the existing international frameworks, in particular United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and International Maritime Organization (IMO) . As one concrete example, the need for an early ratification and implementation of the Ballast Water Management Convention was highlighted
- 3) The OSCE is well-placed to enhance the exchange of best practises of regional co-operation mechanisms such as HELCOM and the Black Sea Commission
- 4) The role of the OSCE field presences was highlighted in particular in terms of capacity building and promotion of regional co-operation
- 5) The OSCE provides a platform for conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation, including in issues pertaining to waterways
- 6) The work done within the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) was highlighted, and the OSCE will continue to contribute to this initiative
- 7) The OSCE projects and capacity building activities benefit from co-operation with international organizations and financial institutions; the EU Central Asian Strategy opens perspectives for support
- 8) The OSCE contributes to the multi-stakeholder dialogue among various actors, including business community, civil society, and academia

Finally, I would like to thank the Coordinator's Office for the good co-operation in organising this Preparatory Conference.

I would also like to thank the interpreters and the staff of the Hotel Kalastajatorppa.

And once more I would like to thank you for contributing to the successful start of the 16th EEF. I look forward to seeing you again in Vienna, Ashgabat and Prague.

Thank you for your attention.