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OSCE AS A PLATFORM FOR DIALOGUE AND CO-OPERATION

**Presentation by the Chairperson of the 13th OSCE Economic Forum,
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Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia**

Prague, 27 May 2005

Dear Colleagues,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

After a whole week of stimulating discussions on the topic of demography, migration and integration of persons belonging to national minorities, let me present some of the main ideas, conclusions and policy recommendations of this year's Economic Forum. I would like to emphasise that they embrace a wide range of issues, many of them beyond the OSCE framework and its mandate. On the other hand, the global approach followed by some presentations additionally helped us understand the overwhelming scope of these important and highly relevant issues.

WRAP-UP PRESENTATION OF CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Within **Working Session I – Population development**, it was emphasised that the Preparatory Seminars of the Thirteenth Meeting of the OSCE Economic Forum contributed to a clearer picture of the demographic reality in the OSCE area and its neighbourhood, and to a better understanding of the OSCE's role in this context. This was recognised as an indispensable precondition for identifying the political priorities of how economic and security concerns could be addressed on a national and international level.

The results of a multi-year "Programme for the Creation of a General Model for the Collection, Application and Sharing of Migration-related Data" were presented. It was revealed that improving governments' capacity to collect and apply data provides a better basis for realistic policy making. Promoting dialogue and co-operation between the countries and experts participating in the programme and addressing issues of common concern is further needed. The scope of data-sharing mechanisms and a number of more elaborated indicators should be developed. Furthermore, it was suggested that the OSCE participating States take an active part in and support with resources the expansion of data-sharing mechanisms. The OSCE was encouraged to further facilitate respective

multinational programmes, seminars and training in order to support the above-mentioned objectives.

Demographic changes and trends in the context of demographic transitions of the 20th century were elaborated as well. The historical assumption that fertility decline would stop at the replacement level has not been confirmed in reality. Namely, half of the world population today is below replacement level and Europe was the first continent to fall below it. This fact, in combination with higher life expectancy and the decline of the working population, has already had negative social and economic impact on the whole OSCE, with possible serious implications for stability and security.

It is therefore important to identify research priorities and determine institutional needs in the field of population development. There is an urgent need for comparative European demographic analysis that goes beyond the already existing networking of national institutes. Thus, it was proposed to establish a European Population Research Centre with direct communication to policy making, which would conduct policy-relevant research and analysis to the highest standards. The OSCE is expected to make a political contribution to this objective by addressing the governments of the participating States accordingly.

It was proposed to establish a specific Forum to focus on demographic trends and population development, including migration by transforming the existing Informal Working Group on Gender Equality and Anti-Trafficking and broadening its mandate. This Working Group could additionally focus on promoting activities for increasing awareness arising from the challenges and responses required in the sphere of demography, migration and integration, promotion of standard-setting and gender equality as a prerequisite for sustainable family policy. It shall furthermore provide best practices for combining maternity and family commitments with professional careers for women and men on an equal footing. In order to assist the Working Group with analytical studies and background material and data, it was suggested to establish a special unit within the Office of the Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities.

Within the discussion of the broad and complex field of migration, **Session II** dealt with issues concerning the **Improvement of economic prospects in countries of emigration**. The session highlighted the complex interaction between migration and economic development. While improving economic opportunities in countries of origin should help reduce emigration pressures, migrants can also be a resource for economic, social and political progress through remittances and their human capital. Capacity building in education and research was mentioned as a high priority task in the majority of participating States in transition. New approaches to reducing negative impacts stemming from “brain-drain” are also needed. These efforts require broad support from the international community, including the OSCE. A possible niche for the OSCE in this process could be to support some components of education systems that are most relevant for the OSCE agenda, such as education for minorities, migrants and other vulnerable groups. Adequate training programmes, especially those for improving the employment capabilities of these segments and promoting the circulation of migrants between

countries of destination and countries of origin, should also be stimulated and assisted, especially through the exchange of information and experiences.

Microfinance and Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) lending can be a strong driver of local economic growth. It would be worth addressing the specific problem of youth unemployment. One approach could be to design a programme combining microfinance and/or SME loans with a connected grant programme to provide incentives for SME and micro-entrepreneurs to hire and train younger workers.

The cross-border co-operation between countries with different economic development is very important. It is also very important for more advanced countries to invest in their less developed neighboring regions. That would create more sustainable overall economic growth and better solutions for different social problems, as well as contribute to the containment of irregular economic migration.

Session III dealt with issues of **Environment and Migration**. Apart from being caused by personal experience and expectations, migration is also pulled by opportunity and pushed by poverty, wars, and natural and man-made disasters. Estimates show that some 25 million people globally have been forced to abandon their homes, with little hope of returning, due to environmental degradation. In order to alleviate the situation, the importance of community involvement, public awareness and access to information in identifying environmental risks and potential solutions was highlighted.

It was pointed out that only through consistent and co-ordinated action could we purchase for ourselves more lasting security. The equivalent of the cost of 21 days of global expenditures of military presence would be sufficient to solve the most pressing environmental problems and their negative consequences. When devising economic and social policies, an environmental perspective should be taken into account. Co-operation and co-ordination, both between and within States, can help avoid the unforeseen consequences caused by man-made and natural disasters leading to migration and displacement.

Participating States have the responsibility to ensure that rules are in place to protect the environment from unsustainable practices and that these rules are enforced. Environmental security is closely linked to human and economic security. An OSCE cross-dimensional perspective is important when considering cases of environmental migration and displacement.

The OSCE's mandate in enhancing environmental security is primarily political and can be fulfilled *inter alia* by encouraging implementation of existing conventions, securing political support from governments and citizens of affected countries, mobilizing and coordinating resources and helping to recognise the warning signals of environmentally induced population movements. OSCE Field Presences have an important role to play in implementing this mandate, including developing, implementing and monitoring primarily small-scale and community-focussed project activities.

Session IV aimed at describing and developing ways and means for **Providing services for migrants**. One of the focal issues addressed was how to develop policy recommendations based on best practices in providing services for migrants as well as to suggest how the OSCE, IOM and other partner organizations could facilitate international co-operation and networking in the field and adopt and implement them in the OSCE region, as appropriate.

Migrants often base their decisions to migrate on poor or inaccurate information. Countries of origin and of destination face many challenges in providing good migrant services, such as the lack of information technology facilities and lack of knowledge on the part of migrants as to how to conduct proper research about their destination country. Further challenges entail common beliefs by migrants that information about immigration to a country of destination is understood as classified information that countries of destination do not wish to share. Migrants often tend to believe that there is reluctance by countries of destination to provide information to countries of origin.

The primary goal of migrant services should therefore be to provide accurate information about destination countries and to assist migrants in language, cultural adaptation and vocational training for jobs in demand in the destination country. International organizations can assist in providing these services and in building the capacity of government structures so that they can later take over the function of providing services such as research, collection and dissemination of information, counselling and training. However, it is equally important that the information on employment opportunities in the countries of origin is provided to those who consider returning home. To enable potential migrants to take an informed decision, information on the risks and consequences of irregular migration should be available.

However, services for migrants should be directed not only at migrants, but also at communities that are affected by migration. Here public-private partnerships, the government and civil society could play a very effective role in providing migrant services. In this sense, migrant services should consist of several activities, such as pre-arrival services consisting mainly of relevant information for migrants, post-arrival offering information and services such as housing, rights and responsibilities, medical services, education and so on. Next are translation and interpretation services, and measures to reduce community tensions and xenophobic reactions to help communities affected by migrants, including information on the number and the characteristics of migrants.

The OSCE should identify best practices in migrant/immigrant services within the context of OSCE participating State's needs. The criteria would be how different practices enable migrants to integrate into society and increase migrants' positive impact on communities of destination.

Countries of origin and countries of destination should collaborate to provide a one-stop information source for migrants to obtain pre-arrival and post-arrival information on their rights and responsibilities.

Awareness-raising about migration should be done through a combination of government, international organizations, civil society and private sector groups such as business, ethnic, and religious organizations, but most importantly the message must be spread using migrant networks, because migrants are more likely to believe the information being channelled through these sources rather than directly from the government or international organizations.

Building on the OSCE/IOM pilot initiatives, further projects could render assistance to countries of origin in establishing migrant services and migrant information service centres and provide training to national specialists and government officials dealing with migration issues. Apart from that, the OSCE could support regional dialogue on migration issues.

OSCE participating States should support an Internet-based information platform between migrant groups in countries of origin and countries of destination, while the OSCE could serve as a clearing house for information on how national migrant service programmes could be improved.

Within **Session V** attention was given to **Awareness raising and economic integration in countries of destination**. The full economic integration of migrants benefits the migrants and their host communities. Migrants often face challenges to employment stemming from lack of skills, limited host country language fluency and determination in the labour market. Programmes to overcome these barriers are needed to ensure the economic participation of migrants. Respect for the legal rights of migrants as enshrined in international and national law will also help improve the economic integration of migrants. Integration of migrants is, however, complicated by high rates of irregular migration.

According to the estimates presented, there are as many as 6.4 million irregular migrants in Europe. Empirical evidence shows that in some cases, by opening up legal migration channels, irregular migration flows may also increase if steps are not taken to curb these flows. Further elaboration on meaningful and comprehensive migration policies and migration management could lead to sustainable solutions for both countries of origin and countries of destination. In order to develop these policies, there is also a need for government-driven, formal and informal migration dialogue.

It was stressed that the OSCE could contribute to increasing the positive impact of migration through seeking synergies with regional inter-governmental dialogue on migration issues. In co-operation with other relevant organizations, the OSCE should seek to provide assistance in developing and improving national policy framework, legislation and to implement integration and anti-discrimination programmes in participating States.

In co-operation with relevant international organizations, the OSCE could furthermore promote the implementation of relevant international conventions and agreements to

protect the rights of migrants and to facilitate the comprehensive integration of migrants in countries of destination. In addition, the OSCE could assist participating States in implementing national and international laws in a coherent and integrated way, bringing social dialogue and policies into action. One of the key actions in this respect could also be to develop programmes to mitigate migration pressures and brain-drain by raising awareness and providing economic opportunities at home.

The significance of **the informal sector** was presented in **Session VI**. It was stressed that there is a two-way connection between the informal sector and irregular migration. The informal sector attracts irregular migrants both for employment and for illegal activities such as trafficking and smuggling. In this respect the OSCE can take an active role with other international organizations and thus contribute to the reduction of all forms of exploitation. In the other direction, irregular migration fuels the development of the informal sector. The informal sector and the irregular migration linked to it have a direct impact on security and stability as well as on human rights and economic development. This makes them relevant for the OSCE, which has an important role to play as a forum for dialogue and exchange of information.

Minimising the negative consequences of the informal sector and irregular migration is a matter of governance and, to this end, commitments of governments to comply with their obligations as enshrined in international law. It requires developing and implementing effective policies in the economic and migration spheres, both in countries of origin and countries of destination, in order to encourage regular migration, discourage irregular migration and promote sustainable economic development.

The OSCE can usefully help raising awareness of the benefits of regular migration, risks of irregular migration and opportunities for forging bilateral, regional and other agreements in order to reduce the negative impact of irregular migration linked to the informal sector.

Session VII touched upon **Policies of integration of persons belonging to national minorities**.

Modern societies, including the societies of the participating States of the OSCE, have always been and still are internally diverse. Diversity is constantly increasing due to migration and the globalization process. For this reason, diversity needs not only to be acknowledged, but also needs to be managed to ensure stability and peace in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies.

The best way to manage diversity is “integration respecting diversity”. This concept is based on the full and equal participation in all sectors of society of all persons, including those belonging to national minorities. Such integration should respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, among them the right of persons belonging to national minorities to maintain their own identity and culture. This integration is in the interest not only of persons belonging to national minorities, but also in the interest of society as a whole. It

reduces risks of conflicts and increases the possibilities for economic and social development.

Integration respecting diversity is a **two-way process**. It requires the active participation of all relevant actors, such as the state, institutions, civil society and individuals, including persons belonging to minorities. Speaking of active participation, its essential components are political, cultural and economic participation. Education and the media, as well as science and research, also play particularly important roles in striving for inclusion, integration and participation of persons belonging to national minorities.

The principle of non-discrimination is the starting point for a legal framework, standards and policy instruments of integration respecting diversity. This principle has evolved from strictly formal equality into one which seeks to promote substantive equality. It is not only about the right to participate, but also about the opportunity to participate. To achieve this, special measures may be needed, for example in employment or education policies. These measures need to be tailor-made, especially when they are to stimulate integration of marginalized minorities. However, these special measures should be temporary and should not result in reverse discrimination.

Another useful policy instrument is the impact assessment of all existing and new governmental policies from the perspective of persons belonging to national minorities. Consultation with representatives of these groups is essential in this respect. All policies and measures should seek to promote the integration of persons belonging to national minorities and potentially excluded, including economically and socially deprived, persons, in many cases migrants.

It was suggested that the OSCE draft and adopt a statement of principles for integration respecting diversity. Focusing on persons belonging to national minorities, it might have wider application in the OSCE participating States. Such a set of principles should be based on existing OSCE and other international standards. It should also take into account positive practices in the participating States and include all key elements of the integration process.

Session VIII – Economic and social integration of persons belonging to national minorities built upon the discussion in the previous session, focusing on some specific dimensions of integration. In this context it was concluded that marginalisation, poverty, lack of access to education and economic opportunity are dangerous. They could potentially even result in social and economic instability and unrest. Considering the living conditions and marginalization of the Roma and Sinti, policies and measures for the improvement of their situation and for their equal integration deserve more attention.

Discussing inclusion and integration, it should be stressed that this problem is wider than the High Commissioner on National Minorities mandate. Namely, in addition to persons belonging to national minorities, other individuals, such as migrants, new minorities and others, can be de-privileged, excluded or discriminated against.

Regardless of the official recognition of a specific, distinct community as a national minority, the existing international standards regarding the protection of persons belonging to national minorities should be applied. Furthermore, it was expressed that the principles of integration of persons belonging to national minorities could be relevant universally.

Activities, programmes and measures should focus on training, capacity building and other empowerment activities. They should be targeted and adjusted to the specific needs of individual minorities. Simultaneously, they should lead to the mainstreaming and full integration of minorities in the regions where they live. In this context, the initiative to draft and adopt a set of principles on integration was supported.

One delegation insisted/requested that the OSCE should consider developing measures that could contribute to ensuring the legitimate rights of persons belonging to national minorities in Latvia and Estonia.

On the margins of this year's Economic Forum, four side events were organized:

The **Side event with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation** was organized this year for the second consecutive time. The event was aimed at discussing migration and the economic development of the sending countries.

It was mentioned that migration has a strong impact on the security, stability and development of the South Mediterranean region. An in-depth discussion on this issue will continue at the forthcoming Mediterranean Seminar, to be held in Rabat, Morocco, in September 2005 and is expected to lead to concrete recommendations. Although positive dialogue has been established between the northern and the southern shores of the Mediterranean, what is necessary is to focus on the economic and human aspects of migration. The OSCE has an important role to play in this respect. The need to stimulate re-investment of remittances in the countries of origin was noted. Concerning remittances, these are frequently much higher than the amount of foreign aid and foreign direct investment in sending countries.

The **Side event on implementing the Roma and Sinti Action Plan** focused on the increasing access of the Roma to employment and their inclusion in sustainable economic development. Within this session, the need for improved dialogue and co-operation of all relevant actors at the national and international level was stressed. They must facilitate joint planning and programmes for taking advantage of synergies when developing common policies and strategy.

The National Action Plans were mentioned as a vehicle for improving the situation of Roma and Sinti. They should address the issues of education and training, employment and economic initiative, health and housing, information and communication, and the adoption of anti-discrimination legislation. The central goal should be the inclusion and integration of the Roma and Sinti in all spheres of life – economic, political, cultural, and social, including facilitating their participation in mainstream political parties.

Furthermore, the participating States should keep their commitments and increase their efforts to implement the OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti issues. The ODHIR and OCEEA should enhance their activities aiming to strengthen the organizational capacity of Roma and Sinti associations for them to become effective partners for implementing Roma-related policies. It was recommended to OSCE institutions to consider the possibility of establishing a Fund for sustainable development of local Roma communities.

During the discussion at the **Side event on OCEEA Anti-Trafficking Programme on Public-Private Co-operation in the Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings** noted that greater emphasis on economic empowerment activities aimed at income generation and job creation in countries of origin is needed in order to help stem economic migration, alleviate poverty and help break the cycle of trafficking in human beings. The OSCE could engage development organizations and international financial organizations, such as the World Bank, in programmatic discussions on targeting economic development programmes for vulnerable/at-risk groups and marginalized regions.

Changes in patterns and routes of trafficking call for a more intensified multi-sectoral approach, involving government, civil society and the private sector/business community in co-operative efforts to combat trafficking in human beings.

Greater political and resource commitment is needed in addressing the demand side of trafficking, both within as well as outside OSCE regions.

The last side event contained a presentation of the labour migration project in Armenia. It represented a practical example of OSCE field work in the sphere of labour migration.

There are two parts of the project: review of migration legislation and the administration framework, and the nation-wide representative sociological survey of households. These elements present a starting point for policy formulation on labour migration.

THE ROLE OF THE OSCE IN ADDRESSING ISSUES RELATED TO DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENT, MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION OF PERSONS BELONGING TO NATIONAL MINORITIES

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me present the view of the OSCE Chairmanship regarding the role of the OSCE in addressing issues related to demographic development, migration and integration of persons belonging to national minorities. Several ideas expressed within the preparatory process and the Economic Forum itself are good and deserve proper consideration; some are too ambitious and do not take into the account the nature of our Organization. Nevertheless, we should focus on those that are, in our view, feasible and realistic.

Our ambition is to prepare an Action Plan or Strategy on managing migration issues, for adoption at the Ministerial Council meeting in Ljubljana in December this year.

In our view, our next priority should be to formulate a Statement of Principles, guiding the integration of persons belonging to national minorities, for its endorsement in Ljubljana.

The OSCE should continue to serve as a forum for discussion on the issues of migration and the economic and social aspects of integration of persons belonging to national minorities. In this connection, we extend our full support for the organization of the regional conference/workshop on migration in the CIS region.

Furthermore, we would like to express our support for the idea of preparing a Handbook on managing migration.

The OSCE should, in our view, contribute to awareness-raising regarding migration, including environmentally induced migration.

Building on the OSCE/IOM pilot initiatives, further projects could be developed to offer assistance to countries of origin in establishing migrant services and migrant information service centres, as well as to provide training to national specialists and government officials dealing with migration issues.

It may also be suggested to establish an Advisory Group to the OCEEA on demography, migration and integration issues consisting of experts from partner organizations and academia.

We welcome the proposal to establish a specific Forum to focus on demographic trends and population development including migration by transforming the existing Informal Working Group on Gender Equality and Anti-Trafficking in the form of broadening its mandate.

Taking into account the vivid and comprehensive discussions held at this Forum, we sincerely hope that these recommendations will enjoy the broadly based support of the participating States.

IDENTIFICATION OF AREAS FOR CLOSER CO-OPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS ON MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION ISSUES

In the view of the OSCE Slovenian Chairmanship, there is a need to reinforce the co-operation with other international and regional organizations in carrying out the recommendations of the 13th OSCE Economic Forum, particularly with the International Organization for Migration, International Centre for Migration Policy Development, Council of Europe, European Union, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

In this respect let me welcome the recent adoption of the Declaration on Council of Europe – OSCE Co-operation and the signing of the joint Statement by both Chairmen during the Third Council of Europe Summit in Warsaw. One of the priority areas of this co-operation is the protection of persons belonging to national minorities.

The OSCE should take the initiative to coordinate diverse activities and programmes supporting economic development, awareness-raising and provision of information to potential migrants in which numerous national and international actors are involved. Here, the role of the OSCE field presences should especially be mentioned.

In the course of preparations for the Forum, the OSCE has established good collaboration with the International Organization for Migration, International Centre for Migration Policy Development, Council of Europe, the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities and international experts. This provides a viable basis for future joint follow-up activities in selected thematic areas. Co-operation and coordination in collecting, selecting and analyzing data on demography, migration and minorities, development of adequate methodologies and development of joint research projects could be listed as examples. Such co-operation is especially important, as it can provide the basis for the development of adequate policies and action plans.

Important foundations for tolerance, coexistence and co-operation, stability and well-being in diverse, multi-ethnic and multicultural societies in the OSCE participating States are the knowledge and understanding of diversity. Awareness-raising activities and programmes are central tools in this context. Their success calls for the permanent, active participation of educational institutions and media. The co-operation of all relevant international and national actors, including civil society with businesses and enterprises, is also needed. The OSCE could initiate the co-operation of international organizations, such as the Council of Europe and diverse specialized UN agencies, in the development of networks and programmes that can contribute to this end. In establishing a partnership with national and sub-national actors, the OSCE field presences could play a central role, especially in indicating specific needs.

By saying this, let me, Ladies and Gentlemen, conclude the wrap-up presentation of conclusions and policy recommendations. I believe that there is enough room and opportunity for targeted OSCE action. With this, I invite you all to comment on the recommendations presented, in an open discussion.

Thank you.