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CONCLUDING REMARKS

by the Chairperson of the 13th OSCE Economic Forum

**Ambassador Dr. Boris Frlec, Head of the OSCE Task Force, Ministry of Foreign
Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia**

Prague, 27 May 2005

Dear Colleagues, Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Slovenian Chairmanship acknowledges with deep satisfaction the words of praise for putting the issues of demography, migration and integration on the agenda of this year's Economic Forum, which has gathered over 450 participants, representatives of the OSCE participating States, Partners for Co-operation and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, the OSCE Secretariat and field presences, international organisations, non-governmental organizations, as well as academics and representatives of the business community. It was a common understanding that this topic proved to be one of the central issues of concern to the OSCE participating States. The topics of demography, migration and integration remain among the most important challenges for the OSCE Participating States nowadays. As we have learned during these five days, it will attain even greater relevance in the years to come. If not properly addressed, the problems of migration and integration of migrants could lead to serious threats to security and stability within the OSCE area and its neighbourhood. The selected topics are by their nature cross-dimensional and require concerted action.

The Chairmanship has strived to lead the cycle of this year's preparatory seminars and the Economic Forum towards meaningful discussion, and feasible suggestions and

recommendations. In order not to lose momentum, adequate follow-up initiatives in full compliance with the OSCE's political mandate shall follow the discussions, findings and recommendations of the Thirteenth Economic Forum. We are confident that they will represent a useful platform for many feasible follow-up activities of the OSCE. In its efforts for the realisation of various tasks stemming from recommendations of this Forum, the OSCE should further enhance co-operation with its Institutions and other International Agencies.

The role of field presences and, in particular, the Economic and Environmental Officers is of utmost importance in implementing OSCE activities. In order to provide for effective implementation and practical results, the OSCE's capacity and institutional expertise should be effectively linked with other key international players in these fields.

We are glad to note that the Chairmanship's view on the role of the OSCE in addressing the issues of demographic development, migration and integration of minorities was widely supported. This has additionally encouraged the Chairmanship and the Office of the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities to further elaborate concrete steps necessary for the realisation of the ideas presented. We are looking forward to co-operating closely on that with the experts from the OSCE Institutions and leading international agencies. We have been encouraged by the support expressed by some delegations regarding the idea of preparing an Action Plan or Strategy on managing migration issues and of formulating a Statement of Principles guiding the integration of persons belonging to national minorities, to be proposed for consideration as possible deliverables for the Ministerial Council meeting in Ljubljana in December this year.

It is the view of the Chairmanship that the review of the implementation of OSCE commitments in the economic and environmental dimension is an important integral part of the Economic Forum. We would like to thank the UNECE for providing us with the high quality report on the implementation of OSCE commitments in the area of "Integration, Trade and Transport" and interesting presentations delivered to the Forum. We appreciate the support for the new format of the review session. We share the view

that the application of this format represents a step forward in the implementation of the Maastricht Strategy Document in the Economic and Environmental Dimension. In our view, the Memorandum of Understanding between the OSCE and the UNECE has already contributed to closer co-operation and should be further enhanced.

We were happy to note that several delegations expressed their support for the deliberations of the incoming Chairmanship regarding the proposed topic for the OSCE Economic Forum in 2006. It is the understanding of the Chair that there is wide support, even consensus, regarding the theme proposed by the incoming Belgium Chairmanship for the Fourteenth OSCE Economic Forum “Transportation in the OSCE area: Transport development to enhance regional co-operation and stability, and a secure and safe transport network”. A final decision on the theme and its modalities will be taken by the Permanent Council in the coming weeks. This decision should also allow addressing innovative ways and means to further improve quality and the effectiveness of the proceedings in the Economic and Environmental Dimension. We wish the incoming Belgium Chairmanship every success in the preparations for new series of events.

Before concluding, let me express my sincere appreciation to our traditional host, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic. I am especially thankful to the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, Dr. Marcin Swiecicki, and his team, and particularly Mr. Gabriel Leonte and Ms. Andrea Gredler for their immense contribution and valuable assistance provided to the Slovenian Chairmanship in the course of the preparatory cycle for the Economic Forum 2005. Since this is the final Economic Forum with the current co-ordinator, I commend him for his personal contribution to the enhancement and promotion of the Economic and Environmental Dimension and wish him all the best in his future assignments.

I would also like to thank the OSCE conference services and the team of the OSCE Prague Office for their excellent organization of this important gathering. Our special thanks go to the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, International Organization for Migration, International Centre for Migration Policy

Development and all other experts and scholars, and not in the least to the team of Slovenian scholars, whose expertise proved to be indispensable. Furthermore, I would like to extend my thanks to the panellists, moderators, rapporteurs and translators for engaging us in most stimulating discussions. Our sincere thanks also go to all of you, the active participants in events under the umbrella of this year's Economic Forum. You have all contributed to the success of this event.

Thank you.