



Closing Statement

**by Stanislav Raščan, Acting Director General of the Directorate
for Policy Planning and Multilateral Political Relations
at the Third Preparatory Seminar for the Thirteenth Economic Forum
"Integrating Persons Belonging to National Minorities: Economic and other Perspectives"
Kyiv, 10-11 March 2005**

Closing Session

Thank you Mr Chairman,
Distinguished Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The lively discussion over the last two days and the interesting deliberations on the topic of Economic and other Perspectives of the Integration of Persons Belonging to National Minorities demonstrates the relevance of the topic of the Third Preparatory Seminar for the Thirteenth OSCE Economic Forum.

Tensions between majorities and minorities are among the largest sources of instability, violence and conflicts. That is why integration of all persons residing in the territory of each and every OSCE participating State, not only immigrants but also persons belonging to national minorities is a relevant issue that needs to be properly addressed.

Although integration can be considered a central goal pursued by governments and all other actors, in the formulation and execution of integration policies there are no simple answers. Usually, persons belonging to minorities are eager to integrate in the societies where they live. However, in some environments, they are reluctant and have different strategies. Even more serious problem exists when certain minorities are eager to integrate fully, but the majority does not accept their will; usually they are questioning their actual capability to integrate.

This is why there is a need for raising the awareness of the public that ever increasing diversity is one of the main characteristics of modern world. Therefore, the adequate protection of minorities should be considered the foundation and yardstick of democracy. We need to further develop basic principles, minimal standards and measures that would enable inclusion, cooperation, equal rights, antidiscrimination and creation of equal opportunities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Integration as a building block of good governance offers opportunities to maximize potentials of the persons belonging to national minorities thereby benefiting the whole society. Effective political, economic and social participation as well as education are key foundations of any sustainable integration policy.

Effective political participation of persons belonging to national minorities in legislative, judicial and executive branches of government should be guaranteed at national, regional and local level. We shall streamline our efforts towards higher level of effective participation of the persons belonging to national minorities in order to reduce the level of discrimination.

To create economic opportunities for persons belonging to national minorities, OSCE participating States might consider developing legislation and measures which would ensure that persons belonging to minorities can have equal opportunities. When needed, affirmative action programs should be implemented to provide for equal starting positions in realizing these opportunities. However, states cannot be the only providers; civil society, including private and public businesses should be included as well. While equal opportunities should be ensured in all spheres of society and life, including economy and employment, investors should be encouraged additionally to increase investments to the regions where minorities reside. Furthermore, entrepreneurship of persons belonging to national minorities could be seen as a tool for local community empowerment that benefits the whole national economy. Minority entrepreneurship can contribute also to better integration of national economies into the global markets.

Education is a critical tool for the successful integration of persons belonging to national minorities. In addition to formal education, life long-education, training and civic education should be seen as the compulsory measures for the attainment of equal participation. In addition, training and

education must serve as instruments for fostering equal opportunities and enhancing comparative advantages of minorities. Attention should be paid to bilingual or multilingual education of persons belonging to minorities at all levels. One of the challenges for the OSCE participating States is also how to integrate their minority languages fully into their legal systems and to make them applicable and operational in daily life.

In ambition to propose a concrete set of action-oriented undertakings in the area of integration of persons belonging to national minorities for the Economic Forum in Prague, we should consider developing an OSCE Document on principles concerning economic integration of minorities.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to use this opportunity to convey my sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine for hosting final in the series of three preparatory seminars for the 2005 OSCE Economic Forum. My gratitude goes to the Co-ordinator of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities Mr. Swiecicki and his dedicated team for their valuable assistance provided in the course of preparation and realisation of the seminar. The contribution of the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine and his team was valuable as well. Our special thanks goes to the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, whose expertise and guidance in tailoring the agenda and the preparation of the background document was instrumental for the success of this event. Furthermore, I would like to extend my thanks to the panellists, moderators and rapporteurs as well as to the participants.

With this seminar, the preparatory cycle for the Thirteenth OSCE Economic Forum on “Demographic Trends, Migration and Integrating Persons belonging to National Minorities: Ensuring Security and Sustainable Development in the OSCE area” is concluded. The Forum will take place in Prague within the period from 23 to 27 May 2005. Finally, let me use this opportunity to invite you all to participate in this important high-level event.

Thank you for your attention.