



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic
and Environmental Activities

Dushanbe, 23 October 2007

OSCE Conference on the prospects for the development of trans-Asian and Eurasian transit transportation through Central Asia till the year 2015

Welcoming Remarks by

Bernard Snoy,
Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Distinguished Participants,

On behalf of the **Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe**, the OSCE, I would **also** like to welcome all of you to this important conference.

Let me start by briefly explaining to you why the OSCE as a political and security Organization is active in the area of transport. As you may be aware, this conference is a follow-up to the 14th OSCE Economic Forum process. In 2006, this process focussed, under Belgian OSCE Chairmanship, on transport development and cooperation and on transport security. The first preparatory conference on this theme took place here in Dushanbe on 7-8 November 2005. It was here, at that conference, that, for the first time, Tajikistan proposed to organise, here in Dushanbe, a *conference on trans-Asian and Eurasian transit transport development*, together with relevant partner organizations.

During the Forum process, the special needs and challenges of OSCE landlocked developing countries (in Central Asia, South Caucasus and neighbouring regions) were highlighted. Finally, at the concluding session of the 2006 Forum in Prague, the five Central Asian participating States issued a joint statement in which they highlighted the “indivisible link between trade and transport” and emphasized that

“the absence of territorial access to the sea and high transit costs impose serious restrictions on their socio-economic development”.

Based on this and on the recommendations of the Forum process, the 56 OSCE participating States adopted at the **Ministerial Council meeting in Brussels** in December 2006, a Decision on **the “Future Transport Dialogue in the OSCE”**. This Decision provides our Organization with a strong mandate for continued activities in the field of transport and especially with regard to addressing transit and transport issues in OSCE landlocked countries.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Distinguished Participants,

Let me now, without further delay, briefly present to you the Agenda for the next two days. My Office has prepared an annotated agenda, outlining in more detail what exactly will be discussed in each of the sessions. I suggest you use this document for your reference.

Working Session I will focus on the provisions of the **Almaty Programme of Action** and the 2008 mid-term review to which this conference is contributing. Furthermore, the Session will feature **H.E. Khudoyor Khudoyorov**, Deputy Minister of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Tajikistan, and **H.E. Zhenis Kasymbek**, Deputy Minister of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Kazakhstan, who will share with us their views on the importance of the aforementioned Programme.

Working Session II will be offering the floor to *you*, participating Government Officials from across the region to present your progress made regarding the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and to assess your current transit transport, border and customs policies. This session should also lead to identifying remaining gaps and needs as well as plans for future action. Furthermore it is expected to explore avenues for **increased regional cooperation** with regard to the issues under discussion.

Panel Discussion I to be held this afternoon will feature representatives of *International Organizations* and *International Financial Institutions* who will be providing an overview of ongoing transport infrastructure development projects in the region. When making their presentations, panel speakers are invited to respond to the gaps and challenges identified by Government officials in **Working Session II**. I really would like to encourage each of you to engage in a vivid dialogue with the other countries' representatives and stakeholders present here.

In **Panel Discussion II**, which will be held tomorrow morning, representatives of International Organizations will give brief presentations on a number of existing international conventions, that when implemented effectively, prove to be useful tools that could facilitate trade and transport in and across this region.

Finally, **Panel Discussion III** will be offering the floor to private sector representatives. After all it is the business community that is often and foremost affected by physical and non-physical barriers to transport operations in and through Central Asia.

Let me now briefly refer to the **expected outcomes** of this conference and to the possible way ahead.

The Conference first and foremost aims at **strengthening political cooperation** with regard to transit transportation issues across the region; it is also expected to further determine the OSCE's role, in close co-operation with partner organizations, in assisting landlocked developing countries in its region.

One of the main outcomes of the Conference could be a 'Dushanbe Declaration'. In this regard, my Office, in close co-operation with the relevant Delegations to the OSCE and representatives of partner organizations, has facilitated the drafting of a **preliminary text**. Both the Russian as well as the English texts have been made available to you in hard copy.

Until now, this document has been discussed at the level of Delegations to the OSCE in Vienna and been shared with relevant ministries and government agencies in your capitals. *You*, participants in this conference are invited now to contribute to the

further elaboration of the text during the Conference deliberations and will be invited to express support for it during the Closing Session.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Distinguished participants,

I am very pleased to see such good attendance by high level Officials from the broader Central Asian region and beyond as well as from representatives from various International Organizations and International Financial Institutions active in this region. Indeed, you have lots of experience to share in this subject area. I am therefore confident that the meetings of today and tomorrow will be characterized by vivid and inter-active discussions.

Let me end by extending my warmest thanks to the **Government of the Republic of Tajikistan**. We are honoured by the presence of **H.E. Khamrokhon Zarifi**, Minister of Foreign Affairs and we would like to thank particularly **H.E. Abdurahim Ashur**, Minister of Transport who kindly offered to host this important conference. I would also like to thank the **Mr. Sandagdorj Erdenebileg** who represents here the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States, with the support of whom we organize this conference and last but not least, I would like to thank **Ambassador Vladimir Pryakhin** and the OSCE Centre in Dushanbe for their strong support and assistance.

Let me conclude by emphasizing once more the interactive character of this conference; working sessions and panels are designed in a way that allows active participation and discussion. I am looking forward to a fruitful exchange of ideas and views and to a positive outcome.

I thank you for your attention and wish you a pleasant stay in Dushanbe.