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**STATEMENT BY
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CO-OPERATION OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE PLENARY SESSION
OF THE FOURTEENTH MEETING OF THE
OSCE ECONOMIC FORUM**

Prague, 22 May 2006

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The meeting in Prague completes the cycle of events making up the Fourteenth OSCE Economic Forum, which has been organized this year in a new way. During these three days we shall not only review the results of previous discussions and analyse the assessments made and conclusions drawn, but also formulate specific proposals as a basis for draft decisions by the executive bodies of our Organization, ideally for the forthcoming Ministerial Council.

Practical recommendations and, ultimately, OSCE projects relating to the problems being discussed are the only way of affirming the correctness of our approach for increasing the effectiveness of the OSCE Economic Forum, improving the flexibility and adaptability of the economic dimension of this Organization to new risks and challenges, enhancing the synergistic effect of its co-operation with other international institutions and, ultimately, reforming the work of the Organization as a whole.

We believe that we have good reason today to expect a successful outcome to the final meeting in Prague. First, no one can be in any doubt today of the judiciousness of the choice of the theme for the Forum, which gives the Organization plenty of new problems to deal with. The huge importance of transport for safeguarding basic conditions of public life and achieving major social, economic and political goals is evident. Equally unquestionable is the impossibility of resolving the problems associated today with improving the international transport infrastructure and ensuring its security without the concerted efforts of all countries involved in the global economic network.

To deal with the various aspects of this problem, co-operation between States at different levels and in different ways is required. In this connection, the OSCE, in accordance with its mandate, could usefully supplement the political co-operation between States at the bilateral level and in international transport organizations and help to involve non-governmental organizations and scientific and business circles.

Second, the efforts by the Belgian Chairmanship and the countries organizing the preparatory conferences and the first part of the Forum have resulted in an impressive collection of factual material relating to transport, as well as concepts and technical projects for its development. Specific proposals have been made for mobilizing potential for co-operation between countries in the transport sector.

In particular, attention was drawn to the work of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the European Conference of Ministers of Transport, the European Union and World Bank to harmonize national transport strategies, develop transnational transport networks, improve the management of transport systems and safeguard transport security. The work of the European Union High-Level Group of partner countries in elaborating a strategy for the development of transport axes in Eurasia, the Middle East and North Africa was very well received. It was also gratifying to note the interest taken in a number of Russian proposals to utilize the potential of Russia's transport system to foster economic development of OSCE participating States and strengthen stability in the region.

We have a solid pool of information today, summarized by the Chairman-in-Office and the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities and duly analysed in the meetings of the Economic and Environmental Sub-Committee, which should be sufficient to resolve the problems facing us. The main aim of this meeting, I should like to stress once again, is to formulate a concept and basis for the OSCE's activities in the transport sector, building on the work already carried out by the participating States, international organizations and financial institutions with a view to creating real "added value" in this field.

In line with the specific focus of each of the sessions of the Economic Forum, special attention will be devoted in Prague to transport security. In this regard, I should like to inform you that work has started in Russia on the establishment of a comprehensive State system to safeguard transport security. Particular importance is being attached to the elaboration of norms and requirements for facilities and means of transport to protect against terrorism. We are seeking to ensure that these norms and requirements are not lower but in some respects higher than those set by institutions such as the International Civil Aviation Organization, the International Maritime Organization and the World Customs Organization.

I believe that the special session to review the implementation of OSCE transport-related commitments with a particular focus on international legal instruments will be very useful in helping to deal with fundamental problems. Russia attaches great importance to the efforts made in recent years to improve the review of commitments and is grateful to the UNECE for its contribution to this process.

Finally, it is traditional during the consultations in Prague to discuss the theme of the next Economic Forum. This year's experience has shown how important it is for the topic to be of relevance to all participating States. In that connection, we believe that the proposal by Spain, which will take over the Chairmanship, to focus next year on water resource management and preventing degradation of the soil, on the whole satisfies this requirement.

Thank you for your attention.