

**AMBASSADOR ROBERT BOSCH'S SPEAKING POINTS FOR OPENING SESSION  
OF 17<sup>TH</sup> ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENT PREPARATORY FORUM  
16 AND 17 MARCH 2009**

Mr Minister, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, let me once more wish you all a very good morning.

It gives me great pleasure on behalf of the OSCE Presence in Albania to welcome you all here in Tirana and to the opening session of the 17<sup>th</sup> Economic and Environment Preparatory Forum. In the beautiful Albania of which some of you have yesterday seen something already.

I should, first of all, like to thank the Albanian authorities for organizing this important event. That Tirana was chosen by the Greek Chairperson-in-Office is a clear tribute to the proven organizational ability of the Albanian public administration to organize such important events.

The fact that many of you have undertaken lengthy journeys to be with us here today is a clear indication of the importance that the governments and other international institutions represented today attach to the theme of this event.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to take this opportunity this morning as the Head of Presence in Albania to focus a little more on the topic of "migration" for Albania, which is here more emigration, and the links of this emigration to the economy and on daily life.

I believe that the issue is of key relevance given that some 700,000 Albanians work abroad, particularly in Greece and Italy, where they all perform an important and much needed function in the respective national economies.

Recent statistics suggest that the remittances sent back by these workers amounted to around 700 million Euros in 2008.

Not only is this revenue a major source of investment for stimulating domestic businesses here in Albania, it is also an important support for basic subsistence for many poor households, especially in the rural areas, for single mothers, for pensioners and for other vulnerable groups.

As we all know, global economic events are changing rapidly and, even since the launch of the current theme at the first preparatory conference in Prague back in October 2008, the face of the world's economy has changed in ways that we would not have believed possible even back then.

Indeed, many now contend that for countries such as Albania, the effects of the global downturn are now very slowly beginning to be felt, albeit in a limited form, the falling level of remittances and with some migrants even returning home.

These developments can but have a negative effect on the social welfare systems in source countries. We also know that during times of economic crisis there is an increased risk of a correlated increase in activities of concern to the OSCE, such as an increase in crime, in

trafficking of illicit goods and human beings, and deterioration in security. As Minister Nishani has outlined before the Albanian authorities will do everything possible to see to it that this will not happen.

As for Environment protection, I believe that when societies undergo social and economic turmoil natural resources are most at risk from unsustainable exploitation.

Warnings about the danger posed by climate change, for instance, tend to fall often on the 'deaf ears' of both the public and policy makers.

For these reasons, the timing of this conference – if we are honest, by de-fault could not be more timely for sharing experiences about the changing patterns of migration and for the urgent need to formulate appropriate policies to manage the resulting impacts.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, in thanking the Albanian authorities once again for hosting this important and timely event, I would like to wish you a very successful and constructive two-day forum.

I hope you will be able to identify concrete issues that can be brought forward to the main conference to be held in Athens in May.

Lastly, I also want to also wish you a very pleasant stay in Tirana.

Thank you very much.