

**Statement of the GUAM Participating States  
at the 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the OSCE Economic Forum  
May 23, 2005**

Mr. Chairman,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the GUAM Participating States – Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, I would like first and foremost to express our gratitude to the Slovenian Chairmanship and to the office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities for the preparation of the Forum. Our special thanks go to the Government of the Czech Republic for their hospitality.

Mr. Chairman,

The OSCE and the GUAM are both facing common challenges of the modern time: inter- and intra-state conflicts, organized crime, aggressive separatism, illegal migration, demographic problems and others. Furthermore, as the result of a number of recent conflicts we all witnessed massive exoduses of refugees and displaced persons.

The scale of the tasks that emerged ahead of us is growing. Current globalization processes, in particular in the field of ethnic policy, are rather complicated and controversial. On the one hand, there is a tendency towards universalization, on the other hand – peoples seek for preservation of their own national identity.

The only way to harmonize these opposite in their nature processes as well as to settle tensions emerging on interethnic grounds is to consolidate our efforts in order to preserve cultural and ethnic diversity in the OSCE area which is our common achievement as well as to improve and revitalize relevant mechanisms and instruments of international organizations including the OSCE.

It is vitally important to exert all efforts in order to maintain constructive character of interethnic relations, prevent its transformation from a dialogue to a monologue, avoid provoking artificial isolation of nations as well as conflicts on ethnic grounds.

Therefore, it is not accidental that demographic trends, migration and integration of national minorities are discussed within the framework of the Economic Forum, since the connection between mentioned topics and economic development, as well as security and democracy, of any country becomes more evident.

It is only in close interaction that we will be able to cope with them. It is only by joint efforts that we will consolidate the basis of democracy and civil society, that we will overcome the difficulties of the economic development.

The response of the GUAM Participating States to such threats is based on respect to the norms and principles of international law. The GUAM proceeds from the agreed position that these norms must be applied for preservation of multi-ethnicity and cultural diversity as the basics of democratic societies and envisages peaceful co-existence of various minorities within internationally recognized borders of states. Respect of these norms and principles is one of the key preconditions to success.

Assistance of international organizations should be also based on these norms and aimed at the settlement of the protracted conflicts through gradual reintegration of uncontrolled territories into the states where they belong to and restoration of the rights of refugees and IDPs.

In this regard, GUAM is profoundly concerned with the existing destabilizing potential of the unsettled conflicts. We believe that one of our common tasks is not only to resolve them, but also to utilize preventive mechanisms of the Organization with the purpose of preventing similar situations in future.

Our countries which have multiethnic populations and are proud of traditions of peaceful and tolerant co-existence of different ethnic, cultural and religious groups, attach the utmost importance to the issues under discussion at this Forum.

Stepping up cooperation in this field within the OSCE framework is, in our opinion, time imperative. In this context, we would welcome a more active implementation of the OSCE Strategy Document in the Economic and Environmental Dimension. We also stand for further institutional strengthening of the OSCE in this field.

Faster pace of economic growth and development of the particular country could serve as a powerful tool for economic and social integration of persons belonging to national minorities. In view of this, we hope that the results of this Forum will be effectively used with the purpose of further enhancement of our cooperation for the sake of our common benefit.

Thank you.