

Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union**14th Economic Forum
Prague, 22 May 2006****EU Opening Statement**

1. Mr. Chairman, Your Excellency Minister De Gucht, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,
2. The European Union is very pleased to participate in the Second Part of the 14th OSCE Economic Forum. We view the discussions on the theme of "Transportation in the OSCE area: Secure transportation development to enhance regional co-operation and stability" as a valuable contribution to the goals we pursue within the Economic and Environmental Dimension of the OSCE. The Preparatory Conferences in Dushanbe and Baku and the First Part of the Economic Forum in Vienna offered valuable insights for our discussion on transport.
3. The EU would like to thank the Belgian Chair and the Office of the Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities for the excellent food for thought paper on "The transport dialogue in the OSCE" which provides us with a comprehensive overview on the current state of our discussions on the possible role of the OSCE in transport cooperation and security.
4. As one of the three pillars of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security, the Economic and Environmental Dimension is of substantive importance. The EU will continue to support it, with a view to address the security threats and challenges also caused by economic and environmental factors. Continued attention has to be paid to ensure that programmes and projects carried out within the framework of this dimension are consistent with the overall security objectives of our organisation, and commensurate with its available expertise and financial resources.
5. The European Union welcomes the strengthened role which the EED has been enjoying during recent years as a result of the adoption of the 2003 Maastricht Strategy, the Sofia Ministerial Council Decision 10/04 on "Improving the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Economic Forum", the conclusion and implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding between the OSCE and the UNECE, the expansion of the Office of the Coordinator and the activities of the Economic and Environmental Officers in the field presences.
6. The European Union regards the preparations of the Economic Forum by means of two Preparatory Conferences taking place in different participating States and the format of two interlinked meetings of the Economic Forum as a further sign of this enhancement, and is ready to consider such an approach also for the 15th Economic Forum in 2007.

7. We agree with the Chairman-in-Office that the Economic Forum is the venue for a political dialogue where participating States reflect on their commitments and the contributions of the OSCE to economic and environmental matters, in the framework of its cross-dimensional approach to security and stability.
8. The European Union believes that the deliberations of this Forum should result in concrete recommendations for policy formulations, activities and projects for follow-up through the identification of areas where the OSCE can play a role itself or by supporting other international organisations and networks and thus provide added value.
9. The European Union supports efforts to stimulate the political dialogue, including at a sub-regional level, on the role of economic development, to which also efficient and secure transport contributes, in furthering and maintaining peace, stability and security.
10. Nevertheless, the European Union believes that economic development, also through transportation, needs a comprehensive approach where sustainable development is fully ensured. The integration of environmental and social considerations into the economic development is in this sense crucial.
11. The European Union believes that the OSCE in its Economic and Environmental Dimension can contribute to such integration, respecting the leading role played by the competent international organisations. This could also be done in the transport sector, by promoting good governance, by facilitating and monitoring the implementation of political and legal commitments and by integrating transport development and environmental concerns.
12. The EU wishes to emphasise the crucial need to address the security challenges caused by the links between transport and various forms of trafficking, and looks forward to further discussions on the proposed initiative concerning the fight against the illicit air transport of SALW and their ammunition in the OSCE area.
13. Finally, we would like to thank the Czech authorities for hosting the 14th Economic Forum and for their warm welcome here in Prague. We would also like to express our gratitude to the Belgian Chairmanship and to the Office of the Co-ordinator for their efforts in organising this forum. We are looking forward to interesting and fruitful discussions during the days ahead.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, EFTA country Island, a member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

*Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process