

EF.DEL/56/05
25 May 2005

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Permanent delegation of the Republic of Belarus to the OSCE

**STATEMENT BY MR. DENIS SIDORENKO, REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS, AT THE
THIRTEENTH MEETING OF THE OSCE ECONOMIC FORUM**

Prague, 24 May 2005

**Review of the implementation of OSCE commitments in the economic and
environmental dimension (integration, trade and transport)**

Mr. Chairman,

Like the previous speakers, I should like, on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Belarus, to thank the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and its Executive Secretary, Ms. Brigitta Schmögnerova, for the review of the implementation of OSCE commitments in the economic and environmental dimension.

For the first time, this review has been prepared in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding between the OSCE and the UNECE, signed during the last OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Sofia in December 2004. As in previous years, this review is extremely professional and makes a substantial contribution to the work of our Forum.

We believe that the review's focus this year on commitments concerning integration, trade and transport is justified.

Effective economic integration, unhindered trade and reliable and collective transport systems are indispensable for sustainable economic growth and for ensuring the security of participating States.

Mr. Chairman,

The Republic of Belarus is doing everything necessary to meet its commitments in the economic and environmental dimension of the OSCE, including those in the area of integration, trade and transport.

At the present time, Belarus is participating in a number of political and economic integration associations, such as the Belarus–Russia Union, the Common Economic Space, the Eurasian Economic Community and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Most of these organizations are based on the principle of free trade. Belarus regards its participation in these organizations as an important instrument for development and for responding to the challenges of globalization.

In our view, the processes of economic integration should develop in such a way that all the States of the region are ensured integration into the global economy on an equal basis. In that connection, the formation of regional and subregional mechanisms for economic integration in the OSCE area must be as interlinked and co-ordinated as possible, taking into account the mutual economic interests of the countries involved. Integration processes should not lead to any deterioration in the existing conditions for investment, foreign trade activity and, above all, access to markets.

In that regard, the enlargement of the European Union (EU) is of great importance for the OSCE area and for Belarus in particular. Along with the overall positive effect, it also has a number of negative consequences, first and foremost, in terms of stricter visa regimes leading to a decline in the level of business and other contacts. We must not allow established ties to be disrupted or new dividing lines to emerge in Europe, a point that is underscored in the OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension.

In this connection, the Republic of Belarus welcomed the development and initial implementation by the EU of a concept for co-operation with its new neighbours — the European Neighbourhood Policy. In accordance with mutual rapprochement, we support the involvement of all interested countries and integration bodies, without exception, in this programme, also taking into account the concerns and interests of those involved.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government of the Republic of Belarus is consistently and systematically pursuing a policy of foreign trade liberalization by gradually reducing tariffs and applying non-tariff methods to the regulation of foreign trade. The legal framework existing in our country complies with the basic principles set out in the recommendations of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

We are also working towards the accession of Belarus to the World Trade Organization, which we regard as a most important stage in our country's integration into the global economy. We are taking specific measures to ensure that our country's economic laws comply with WTO rules and that our internal market is more open to foreign goods, services and investment. At the same time, in the negotiation process we believe that it is essential to retain the appropriate potential to protect our national economic interests following our accession to the WTO. It is our hope this process will be concluded speedily and successfully.

The transport system of the Republic of Belarus plays an extremely important role in ensuring the viability of the country's multi-sector economy. Its sustainable and effective operation is essential for the stabilization, expansion and structural reform of the country's entire economy, for ensuring national security and for improving the population's standard of living.

A large volume of transit traffic passes through the Republic's territory. As part of the efforts to create a single transport system in Europe, Belarus is improving the two trans-European transport corridors that pass through its territory.

On the whole, the transport problem is of key importance for economic development and security in the OSCE area. In that connection, we should again like to express our support for the Belgian proposal regarding the topic for the Forum in 2006.

Mr. Chairman,

Obviously, Belarus is encountering a number of difficulties as it implements its commitments in the area of integration, trade and transport. Not everything is working flawlessly yet. The Government is aware of these problems and is taking the necessary steps to overcome them. We are, however, also counting on practical assistance from international organizations, including the OSCE, in our continuing efforts to integrate Belarus into the global economy

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.