

Opening Statement

18th Economic and Environmental Forum, Part 2, Prague – May 24-26:

“Promoting Good Governance at Border Crossings, Improving the Security of Land Transportation and Facilitating International Transport by Road and Rail in the OSCE Region”

- The United States joins in welcoming the participants who will take part in this forum over the next three days and thanks the organizers. The intensive discussions in previous Forum meetings in recent months in Astana, Vienna, and Minsk, included many suggestions for potential OSCE activity, and we hope this meeting will help us identify those activities where the OSCE can make a contribution toward improving management, governance, and security at borders, and toward facilitating legitimate economic activity.
- The importance of this topic is clear, especially for land-locked regions such as Central Asia. This year, with Kazakhstan’s Chairmanship, is an opportune time for the OSCE to take up these issues.
- Kazakhstan has made clear its desire to hold an OSCE summit under its chairmanship. We believe the OSCE's next summit, regardless of when or where it takes place, should include a focus on the OSCE's role in Central Asia. Central Asia would benefit from greater economic cooperation and reduced barriers -- physical and otherwise -- to trade and transport. We should use the opportunity of this Forum to further promote good governance and customs management at border crossings in Central Asia, as well as in the rest of the OSCE region. Efforts to facilitate trade could have positive spillover effects for economic prosperity, jobs and regional peace and stability.
- This topic also has particular relevance to Afghanistan. The OSCE can be an effective platform to promote meaningful political and economic links between Afghanistan and its northern neighbors. These neighbors are well positioned to

both assist with, and benefit from, economic development in Afghanistan, and trade will be a major component of this development. OSCE participating states and the OSCE as an organization should continue providing assistance to Afghanistan, and should look for opportunities to expand this assistance. Where possible, training should take place in Afghanistan.

- Throughout this conference, we have heard many times that the instruments and agreements to simplify procedures at border crossings, while enhancing security, already exist. What is needed is the adoption and effective implementation of these measures. We should look to existing arrangements such as those of the UN, the UNECE, and the WCO, and then utilize the OSCE, including its field missions, to either provide or facilitate the capacity building or other activities necessary for this implementation.
- The follow-up ideas provided by the Office of the Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities give us a good starting point for thinking about where to go from here. For example, expanding or replicating the trade resource centers created by the OSCE Office in Tajikistan, aimed at facilitating licit trade and promoting good governance at border crossings, might be considered. Further cooperation between the Office of the Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities and the Border Management Staff College (BMSC) in Dushanbe could broaden the BMSC's activities and enhance its impact. The OCEEA likely could work with the BMSC in a variety of ways to promote integrity in border services, combat corruption, and facilitate licit trade.
- These proposals, together with those in the UNECE and other papers, and the ideas raised in the course of this year's Forum, provide us with many options to choose from as we consider here and over the remainder of the year how we can enhance the OSCE's impact on trade facilitation and border management.
- Thanks again to those who have travelled here for this Forum, to the delegation of Kazakhstan, and to Mr. Svilanović and his staff for their work in organizing the Forum.