

**Second Preparatory Conference  
for the 16<sup>th</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum**  
“Maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the OSCE area:  
Increasing security and protecting the environment”

**Ashgabat, 6-7 March 2008**

**Opening Statement by  
Ambassador Marc Perrin de Brichambaut,  
OSCE Secretary General**

Your Excellency,  
Distinguished Ambassadors,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to join H.E. Rashid Meredov, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan, and Ambassador Aleksii Härkönen, Head of the OSCE Task Force, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland/OSCE Chairmanship, and welcome all of you to this second Preparatory Conference for the 16<sup>th</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum - “Maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the OSCE area: Increasing security and protecting the environment”.

Your Excellency, Minister Meredov, I am grateful for your kind words and for the hospitality and support offered by the Government of Turkmenistan in the organization of this Conference.

Ambassador Härkönen, allow me to thank the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship, both the teams in Vienna and Helsinki, for their excellent co-operation with the Secretariat in preparing this event.

This Conference brings together a lot of expertise and in-depth knowledge about a variety of issues relating to maritime and inland waterways co-operation as well as landlocked countries issues. I do believe that for the countries in the region as well as for the whole OSCE community it is important to discuss these matters.

I am impressed by the high number of participants who gathered here today. I can recognize numerous government representatives and experts, representatives of key international and regional organizations, many civil society organizations, researchers and academics, as well as business representatives. I believe that this wide participation reflects the strong interest in the OSCE economic and environmental activities, not only of the OSCE participating States but also of other important partners. This is a proof that the OSCE is indeed a relevant actor as far as economic and environmental aspects of security are concerned.

I am particularly pleased to note the high level of participation from the Central Asian participating States. I want to emphasize that this region is extremely important for the OSCE. Countries in Central Asia have traditionally expressed significant interest for the

economic and environmental dimension of the OSCE. I strongly encourage you to continue to play a pro active role this year's OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum is concerned. This is an important opportunity that should not be missed.

I am also delighted to see here our Economic and Environmental Officers working in the OSCE field presences. I would like to extend to them my warmest thanks, in particular for their valuable input during the preparation process for this 16<sup>th</sup> Economic and Environmental Forum. They bring a crucial contribution to our organization and they will also play a singular role in implementing follow-up activities to the Forum process.

Distinguished participants,

I hope this Conference will be an enriching experience for all of you. Each one of you can make a significant contribution, through active involvement in the discussions. Each one of you, I am convinced, will take back home new knowledge and new ideas. I also hope that this Conference will provide an opportunity for identifying areas for future OSCE involvement, that we will together formulate useful recommendations for our Organizations and its participating States, to be later on implemented, in partnerships with other organizations and stakeholders.

The Conference should discuss, in an integrated and comprehensive manner, both economic and environmental aspects related to maritime and inland waterways as well as the problems faced by landlocked countries. The Annotated Agenda of the Conference, which you all have received, includes a number of topics and questions which we believe would contribute to streamlining our discussions. I will not refer in detail to all these issues but, to illustrate the complex task we have in front of us, I will just briefly mention a few:

- regional management of marine ecological resources and combating maritime and land based pollution as well as the introduction of alien species by ballast waters;
- the impact on environment of economic activities such as transport, oil and gas extraction, and subsequently oil spills preparedness and response;
- the transport of dangerous goods;
- gaps in river basin management;
- trade and transit transportation and the bottlenecks related to customs and border crossing;
- maritime security co-operation, including combating illegal activities such as trafficking and smuggling;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you know, the First Preparatory Conference was organized in Helsinki on 10-11 September 2007. The First Part of the 16<sup>th</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum took place in Vienna, on 28-29 January. These meetings demonstrated that there is a strong

political support, both from the OSCE participating States and from key partner organizations, for the future OSCE engagement in a number of areas and activities related to the Forum's theme. There is a strong momentum. We should take advantage and build upon it. It is my sincere hope that the Ashgabad Conference will bring even more clarity on how to proceed further.

The main objectives of the Conference are to identify the most pressing challenges we are confronted with and to recommend possible future actions for the OSCE and its participating States in order to tackle these challenges.

Every challenge represents at the same time an opportunity – an opportunity to advance regional co-operation, an opportunity to strengthen good governance.

The OSCE could be instrumental in strengthening regional co-operation with regard to maritime, environmental, transport and security issues. It can also contribute by facilitating inter-regional exchanges and co-operation.

Co-operation can definitively bring a lot of benefits. For that to happen, though, an appropriate and functional institutional environment must be in place, at local, national, and at regional level. In other words, strengthening good governance is a pre-requirement.

Equally, it is important to strengthen co-operation between the public and the private sector. The business community has a lot to offer in this regard. Listening to the voice of the civil society and taking it into account when formulating and implementing policies is also important. The OSCE can contribute to raising awareness, enhancing multi stakeholders' co-operation and strengthening civil society participation for purposes of environmentally sustainable development or in addressing maritime environmental challenges.

The Secretariat and the field presences, in co-operation with expert organizations, could assist countries, through capacity-building and training programmes, to strengthen their capacity to fully implement the provisions of international legal instruments they have signed.

While the meetings in Helsinki and Vienna focussed on the experiences in the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea, now in Ashgabad, we will explore more the situation in the Caspian Sea and the Mediterranean. Recent regional developments such as the Framework Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea (Tehran Convention), as well as the activities conducted under various regional initiatives, such as the work of the Caspian Environment Programme (CEP), represent important milestones. Our Conference should represent yet another opportunity for the countries in the region to share their views with regard to priorities, needs and further developments. We should also see how these regions could benefit from other regional co-operation experiences in the OSCE area.

Those meetings in Helsinki and Vienna, as well as previous OSCE activities further to the Ministerial Council Decision No. 11/06 on the Future Transport Dialogue in the OSCE, also demonstrated that the OSCE can play an important role in assisting landlocked developing countries in our region to overcome their transit transportation challenges. This can be achieved in a number of ways, by strengthening the partnerships and co-operation among landlocked and transit countries as well as with relevant international organizations, which can provide expertise, by addressing both transit transport policy and infrastructure related

issues and by promoting effective customs and border crossing practices, among others by introduction of Integrated Border Management measures.

Here in Ashgabad, we will also discuss river basin co-operation with a special focus on Central Asia and assess the current mechanisms, initiatives and opportunities. As numerous rivers in the region are transboundary, it is necessary to ensure that active co-operation among neighboring countries in the field of protection and use of water resources is taking place and that it is effective.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We would like to hear from you, the participants, how you see the OSCE contribution and support towards achieving our common objectives of strengthening co-operation, security, promoting sustainable development and building a prosperous future for the region.

Let me conclude by thanking, once again, the Government of Turkmenistan for its hospitality. I also want to thank all those who have been involved in the organization of the Conference, particularly the OSCE Centre in Ashgabad and the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities. Thank you, as well, Ambassador Härkönen, for the excellent co-operation and the leadership manifested by the Finish Chairmanship.

This Conference in Ashgabad will be an important step forward towards the second part of the 16<sup>th</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, on 19-21 May in Prague. It should bring us closer to our objective of streamlining the preparatory process for Prague and identifying relevant follow-up activities.

I am looking forward to hearing your views.

Thank you for your attention.