

Statement by Orkhan Zeynalov, Third Secretary of the Department of Economic Cooperation and Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan at Second Preparatory Conference to the 16th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, Ashgabat, March 6-7 2008.

Distinguished participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of Turkmenistan as well as to the OSCE Secretariat for organizing this meeting in Ashgabat. At the same time, my thanks go to many people who have been involved in preparing this meeting.

As a landlocked country, Azerbaijan continues to take appropriate, consistent and effective measures aimed at to overcome the burdens of remoteness and isolation from world markets as well as other challenges stemming from its geographical handicap. In this regard, the Government of Azerbaijan considers the efficiency improvement of the current transit environment in the newly independent and developing land-locked States as well as their transit developing country neighbours as priority areas for further actions to be undertaken by the international community.

At the same time we should consider that majority of countries in our region are landlocked and our joint activities should be also in line with the goals of the Almaty Programme of Action.

Along with being landlocked Azerbaijan at the same time is situated at the crossroads of the shortest transport routes, connecting Europe and Asia. This convenient geostrategic location enables participation of the country in a number of trans-regional projects, which are vital for promotion of regional trade and infrastructure building.

Among successful initiatives we should particularly note, the EU-sponsored project on Europe – Caucasus – Asia Transport Corridor (TRACECA Program) aimed at the restoration of the Great Historic Silk Road, the Intergovernmental Secretariat of which is headquartered in Azerbaijan. Considering our potential as a natural gateway between North and South Azerbaijan also actively participate in other regional transport initiative – North-South Transport Corridor. In 2007 Azerbaijan along with Turkey and Georgia has launched the construction of Baku – Tbilisi – Kars railway link which undoubtedly will play an important role in regional transportation.

I would like to note that development of private sector in the sphere of transport, the realization of freight transportation by domestic ships in local and foreign harbors, transportation of oil and oil products from the country by the pipelines and elimination of obstacles to the railway transport considerably influenced the increase of the freight transportation volume within the country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today development of overall economic ties in the region is impossible without efficient and secure transport and communications networks operations. One of the main goals of regional security is to ensure supply security which in turn depends on reliable and efficient transport routes.

Azerbaijan welcomes the positive changes in the regional transport system and relying on its favorable geostrategic location is ready to play a proactive role for the realization of the full potential of regional cooperation.

Thank you.

