



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008  
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008  
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

EEF.DEL/40/08  
21 May 2008

ENGLISH only

## **Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union**

### **16<sup>th</sup> Economic and Environmental Forum Prague, 21 May 2008**

#### **EU Closing Statement**

The European Union thanks the Finnish Chairmanship, the Secretary General of the OSCE, the Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities and the OSCE staff for having organised the second part of the 16th Economic and Environmental Forum. We would also like to thank our Czech hosts for their generous hospitality.

As the review session and several interventions have confirmed, the OSCE could play a role in the promotion of the wider acceptance and implementation of international legal instruments. We appreciate the approach adopted by the UNECE and would like to thank them for their valuable report, as well as for their continuing commitment to intensified cooperation with the OSCE. We would also like to thank the IMO for its valuable contribution and for bringing its expertise to the Forum process.

The EU reiterates that useful work can be done to deepen regional and interregional cooperation in the field of the Economic and Environmental Dimension, as well as to assist land-locked countries and regions to overcome their particular problems. We welcome the fact that a full session was devoted to land-locked countries. As this session revealed, water management is of major concern for Central Asian countries. The EU has a number of relevant instruments, including the EU strategy for Central Asia in which water management is a key element, and is willing to share its experience with interested partners as well as to support the Central Asian participating States to address challenges in this field.

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The European Union agrees with those speakers who have highlighted the strategic importance of maritime and inland waterways transport as a means to enhance regional economic and environmental cooperation. We share the view that the key contribution of the OSCE lies in facilitating dialogue aimed at raising awareness and creating the political will to overcome obstacles in the development of transport activities, while protecting the environment.

Efficient and secure transport, water management and the protection of the environment all require good public and corporate governance as well as strong institutions at all levels. This can help to reduce poverty and inequality, as well as to increase social integration and opportunities for all.

The EU welcomes the fact that several concrete proposals have been put forward during this Forum. The EU will continue to engage constructively in the process of considering these and other ideas in the field of maritime and inland waterways cooperation, including the proposals put forward in the food for thought paper by the Finnish Chairmanship and the Office of the Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities.

At this juncture, allow me to welcome the tabling of the Greek Chairmanship's plans for the next Economic and Environmental Forum. The EU looks forward to further discussion on the proposed theme for next year's Forum.

Mr. Chairman, this meeting marks the end of the conference cycle of the 16<sup>th</sup> Economic and Environmental Forum, which has focussed on maritime and inland waterways cooperation. However, our work in this dimension does not stop when we leave Prague today. We are looking forward to further discussions in preparation of the Helsinki Ministerial Council, including on the topic of climate change and its security implications.

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In conclusion, the EU would like to reiterate two points. Firstly, the EU would like to see more economic and environmental initiatives with a direct link to security and with practical outcomes, in particular economic and environmental activities that can promote dialogue and cooperation and thus contribute to security. What other international organisations are doing and the OSCE's strengths should be taken into account in this process.

Secondly, the EU believes that it is now time to look more strategically at this dimension, building on the progress made, and with the help of the present and future chairmanships set a number of broad targets which could guide our work in coming years. Such an approach, within a cross-dimensional framework, could result in a Ministerial Council decision on the future tasks of the Economic and Environmental Dimension.

The candidate countries Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and Serbia, the European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area Norway, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

\* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process

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