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STATE MARINE POLLUTION CONTROL AND SALVAGE RESCUE  
ADMINISTRATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE  
INTRODUCTORY SESSION OF THE 16th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM**

Vienna, 28 January 2008

Mr. Chairman,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The subject of this year's OSCE Forum is of extreme relevance to all of the Organization's participating States. The stable and efficient functioning of maritime and river transport makes an important contribution to sustainable development and successful international economic co-operation. The process of integration in the OSCE region and the growth of trade make it necessary to further improve the existing system of international transport links and to develop the transport infrastructure. The international community is faced with the major task of safeguarding the security of maritime and river transport in the light of terrorist threats and also environmental and technological risks.

This subject ties up with problems considered by the OSCE Economic Forum in earlier years, permitting recourse to previously adopted decisions and available findings relating to both the transport and the environmental fields. I refer in particular to the decision adopted at the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Brussels on transport dialogue and the Madrid Declaration on Environment and Security, which defined a general outline for the Organization's activities in this area.

In this connection, I should like to point out that the Russian Federation has consistently called for greater flexibility in the OSCE's activities in the economic and environmental dimension and their adaptation to new risks and challenges. We were among the initiators of the reform of the organizational modalities of the Forum with a view to achieving practical results in the form of proposals and recommendations that would then be transformed into corresponding draft decisions of the Permanent Council and Ministerial Council.

At the same time, the work of the OSCE in both aspects of the second "basket" should not go beyond the limits of the Organization's competence or duplicate the activities of other international organizations, specialized institutions or initiatives. Thus, for example, the global regulatory framework for maritime shipping, navigation security and marine pollution

is elaborated by the International Maritime Organization. The application of these rules with account taken of regional specificities is controlled by the corresponding regional organizations. In Europe these include the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM), the Istanbul Commission and the Paris Memorandum.

The Russian Federation attaches the utmost importance to safeguarding the security of shipping, fishing and scientific research in the world's oceans, combined with measures to protect the marine environment, combat terrorism and stop illicit transport by sea, and actively participates in the work of the above-mentioned and other international organizations. We believe that our priority task today is to ensure that the existing requirements for preventing marine pollution are met unconditionally and that new international legally-binding instruments are acceded to.

This meeting of the Forum in Vienna is a seamless continuation of the preparatory conference in Helsinki. We believe that engaged and professional consideration was given there to questions such as the elaboration and implementation of a consistent integrated policy for protecting the Baltic Sea and Black Sea, monitoring the condition and assessing the pollution of the marine environment, ensuring effective transboundary co-operation to deal with the consequences of pollution, and co-operation with business, industry and trade associations.

Over the next two days we shall have the opportunity to build on the discussion held in Helsinki, revise the assessments and conclusions drawn there and also move to a higher level of analysis of the situation, the problems facing us and the OSCE's potential for resolving them.

I believe that we have every reason to be optimistic about the outcome of the first part of the 16th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum. The Finnish Chairmanship has worked well to prepare the agenda, ensure a high level of keynote speakers and invite an impressive list of representatives of international organizations, business and scientific circles. The necessary organizational basis for this meeting is also in place, for which I should like to thank the Austrian authorities and the OSCE Secretariat.

Thank you for your attention.