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**Statement by Ambassador Mr. Andrej Benedejčič, Director-General for Multilateral and Global Affairs of the Slovenian Foreign Ministry, at the "Managing Migration in a Changing Global Environment" Session I of the 17th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum (Part 2), Athens, 18 May 2009**

*Madame Moderator, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is a great pleasure for me to address you all here on behalf of Slovenia. Compared to the six-month Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which my country assumed on May 12 last week, the year-long Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe seems like an exercise in eternity. However, despite the seemingly lengthy mandate, every OSCE Chairmanship faces the challenge of not only advancing its priorities but also ensuring continuity and follow-up in the work of the organization as a whole.

I would therefore like to commend our Greek hosts who, in their leading role in the OSCE this year, continue focusing on the "migration-integration" theme, which has been emphasized by a number of previous OSCE Chairmanships, especially the Slovenian one in 2005. In this connection, I would like to recall that economic and social aspects of migrant labor were identified as one of the areas of cooperation in the field of economics, of science and technology and of the environment among the CSCE/OSCE participating States already in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. It is therefore important that the OSCE has developed a number of important commitments on migration, freedom of movement, and treatment of migrant workers, especially in light of the stated agenda of its "second basket".

Despite this success, however, managing migration continues to be among the most important challenges in the OSCE space. In fact, it is a central issue of concern today, as the OSCE participating States face the consequences of the global financial and economic crisis. One of the crucial questions is whether the economic downturn we are experiencing will have long-term consequences for migration flows. The different aspects of the current crisis contain both "push" and "pull" factors. On the one hand, there are indications that immigrants are more concentrated than natives in those sectors of the economy that suffered by far the most substantial job losses in the past year. However, reduction in financial compensation and remittances could consequently affect the living standards of entire communities in the countries of origin and threaten their development potential. At the same time, because the crisis is making protectionist reflexes and an emphasis on national priorities more popular, the possibility of amplified xenophobia and stigmatisation of migrants in transit and destination countries is becoming more real.

It is for this reason that Slovenia continues paying close attention to the issue of migration management not only in the OSCE, but also within the Council of Europe. The latter has a special role, competence and capacity in addressing migration. Its European Committee on Migration (CDMG) incorporates operational participation from all the 47 member countries. The composition of the committee reflects the breadth of government institutions charged with addressing migration concerns, including ministries of immigration, labor, interior, foreign affairs and others. This is a unique structure, which especially allows policy development to take account of distinct national migration experiences and the diverse branches of government in addressing migration and its consequences.

Through its expertise in the field of community relations, the European Committee on Migration is also responsible for keeping under review the situation of Roma and Travellers in Europe and developing policy and practice aimed at promoting their rights. I am emphasizing this particular point because one of the declared priorities of the Slovenian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe is the promotion of active policy of integration and protection of minorities, Roma and Travellers. In light of the current economic situation the willingness of the Roma to take the risks of migration, repeated expulsions, and self-sufficing clandestine existence warrant additional attention. Let me therefore mention that already next week an international conference will take place in Slovenia under the title "The Education of Roma: Achievements, Opportunities and Future Challenges", in order to highlight the significance of education for the successful integration of Roma and Travellers into society. The conference will be followed by a number of other events in the coming six months relating to Roma and marginalized groups in a European context.

In short, migration is a classic comprehensive security issue with clear links not only to border security and management, and sustainable development, but also to tolerance and non-discrimination, and human rights. On account of the changing global environment it is becoming a more diverse and complex phenomenon, which needs to be addressed in a comprehensive manner and therefore requires a cross-dimensional approach at the national, regional and international levels. The recent migration trends in the OSCE area have seen a number of OSCE participating States become either significant destination, transit or origin countries or a combination of all three with economic, social, cultural and security implications requiring cooperation at different levels.

Slovenia will therefore encourage synergies in the efforts of key international organizations and institutions working in this field. In light of our current role in the Council of Europe we count on close contacts with the OSCE in accordance with the conclusions of the 2005 Third Summit held in Warsaw, and will consult on topical issues, including migration management, with the Greek Chairmanship of the OSCE. We therefore attach great importance to the forthcoming annual high-level meeting in the "2+2" format.

In conclusion, I would like to express my satisfaction at the fact that the topic of the second part of the 17th Economic and Environmental Forum shows that the "migration-integration" theme has been placed firmly on the OSCE agenda. The high level of attendance and the expertise of representatives of participating States and international organizations present here promise fruitful deliberations. On behalf of my Government, I therefore look forward to a productive and rewarding exchange of views.

*Thank you.*