



Statement by Mr. Marek Belka

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**“Maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the OSCE area: Increasing
security and protecting the environment”**

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Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to address you at the 16th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum. The topic - **Maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the OSCE area: increasing security and protecting the environment** - combines many important and timely economic, environmental and security policy issues.

In 2006 and 2007, co-operation between the UNECE and OSCE demonstrated that mutually beneficial outcomes could be produced in the separate areas of transport and the environment. The current Forum unites the subjects of transport and environment allowing both organizations to continue to benefit from their productive partnership.

As you may know, the UNECE manages five environmental conventions. Four of the five focus on regional or transboundary co-operation. The challenges of the management of transboundary waters are addressed by the so-called UNECE “Water Convention” (Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes).

In the UNECE region, more than 150 major rivers and 50 large lakes run along or straddle borders. Twenty countries depend on their neighbours for over 10 per cent of their water needs and five draw three-quarters of their needs from upstream countries.

In such circumstances, allocation of resources, water overexploitation, pollution, droughts and floods may easily lead to “upstream-downstream” or cross border tensions. The “Water Convention” provides a sound framework to address these issues and to prevent and solve potential cross border conflicts. The OSCE participating States should seriously consider acceding or ratifying the “Water Convention” and its protocols on water and health and civil liability.

I am pleased to inform you that UNECE has recently published a useful tool to inform, guide and stimulate action by national governments, international organizations and NGOs to improve transboundary waters co-operation.

The “First Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters” reflects the status, transboundary impacts and trends of all main transboundary water resources in the UNECE region. The

Assessment identifies hot-spots and alarming trends. It can help to prevent and address threats to human security.

This first ever, in-depth review was a co-operative undertaking of governments, national and international organizations - including the OSCE - under the overall leadership of Finland.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the government of Finland for its constructive leadership. I look forward to continuing fruitful co-operation with the current Chair-in-Office and the OSCE secretariat in the context of the “Water Convention”, the forthcoming second assessment of transboundary waters and the dam safety initiative.

The UNECE not only develops and manages transboundary, environmental conventions; it is also a pan-European centre for legal, technical and safety issues related to inland water transport. As such, it develops and administers, in close co-operation with member states, River Commissions and international organizations, legal and analytical instruments for establishing and monitoring an integrated pan-European waterway network.

These tools include the European Agreement on Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN), European Agreement on International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterway (ADN), European Code for inland waterways (CEVNI) and pan-European technical vessel prescriptions (Resolution No.61).

The overall goal is to promote inland water transport as it is the most environmentally friendly mode of transportation. But, even so, the UNECE is mindful about the environmental challenges as inland waterways show exceptional sensitivity. In particular, infrastructure improvements and increases in the volume of goods transported carries potential environmental risks.

The UNECE is also making efforts to increase security of inland waterways. A proposed annex to AGN agreement stipulates specific measures to protect Europe’s waterways from “intentional external influences”.

Of particular significance is monitoring and assessment of compliance. This year, the UNECE will begin the work on the “White Paper on trends

in and development of inland navigation and its infrastructure”. Environmental and security issues will be the main subjects of this inquiry. I would like to encourage active participation and contributions by interested governments and international organizations.

Tomorrow, the Forum will address transit and transport challenges of landlocked countries. In the UNECE region, there are nine landlocked countries. They are all transition economies.

The United Nations has been concerned with lack of adequate transport infrastructure and cumbersome customs procedures. To this end, the United Nations’ Almaty Programme of Action - a global partnership to address transport challenges of landlocked developing countries - suggests simplification, harmonization and standardization.

The UNECE has joined forces with other international organizations to help implement the Almaty Programme of Action.

And this is not an empty pledge - our transport and transit conventions as well as UNECE trade recommendations can help. Let me cite some examples:

- The International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods offers a framework to reduce the duration and number of border controls. And, speaking of border crossings, let me recall that together with the OSCE, the UNECE has organized border crossing facilitation conferences and capacity building events. The UNECE looks forward to continuing this productive co-operation and to developing a joint “Handbook of Best Practices at Border Crossings”.
- The TIR Convention also offers the most effective and expanded tool to minimize high costs of transit.
- The UNECE trade tools - such as the UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT), the UN Layout Key for trade documents and the global standard for Electronic Data Interchange (UN/EDIFACT) - offer many possibilities to improve the efficiency of trade.

Finally, let me also inform you that jointly with the UNESCAP, the UNECE is promoting the Euro-Asian harmonization of transport investments, and the recent UNECE meeting of Transport Ministers in Geneva re-affirmed the importance of building Euro-Asian inland transport bridges.

Let me now turn to the specific role played by the UN Economic Commission for Europe at this meeting.

It is well-established that every May in Prague the UNECE presents its review of the implementation of OSCE commitments. This year transport of dangerous goods will be discussed.

The development of transport networks that “are free of avoidable safety and security and sensitive to the environment” is particularly relevant to transport of dangerous goods. It also represents an OSCE commitment.

Transport of dangerous goods represents a risk for persons, property and the environment. This is particularly so in the OSCE participating States that have no relevant regulations or those that have no adequate capacity to ensure their effective implementation and enforcement.

The UNECE legal instruments in the area of transport of dangerous goods set standards which – if followed - ensure a high level of safety and security; ensure harmonized transport conditions; and facilitate international trade.

Overall, in the area of transport of dangerous goods, the OSCE participating States have made progress, but there remains much work to be done. There is room for improvement in the elementary, but indispensable areas such as data collection and dissemination, assessment, monitoring and capacity building.

To begin the process of improved implementation of OSCE transport commitments, the UNECE report contains three project proposals. Tomorrow, Mr. Olivier Kervella will provide you with a detailed presentation on the UNECE assessment as well as related project proposals.

In closing, UNECE member States welcome co-operation with the OSCE. It is an excellent example of a complementary partnership - a partnership that exemplifies the link between security and economic/environmental dimensions. As Executive Secretary I will do all that I can to continue to strengthen this cooperation which, in the end, benefits all ECE and OSCE member and participating States.
