



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

**Speech by the
OSCE Secretary General,
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**First Preparatory Conference
to the 16th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum**

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

Helsinki, 10-11 September 2007

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you at the concluding session of the First Preparatory Conference to the 16th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum.

The theme of this Conference, the theme of next year’s Forum - “Maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the OSCE area: Increasing security and protecting the environment” – has far reaching implications for the security, economic development and environmental sustainability in the OSCE region.

Over the last two days, we have addressed issues ranging from maritime co-operation, security and safety aspects related to maritime transport (such as vessels reporting and monitoring systems, emergency response systems, etc.), related environmental concerns (such as oil spills, ballast waters, discharges of pollutants, etc.), as well as co-operation on trans-boundary water courses and rivers. All of these issues are topical, and none of them are straightforward. All require our attention and a comprehensive response.

One of the main achievements of this Conference has been to offer a global picture of the current situation in the area of maritime and inland waterways co-operation. We have made an overview of the international frameworks for co-operation in this area and of the activities that are being carried out by the most relevant organizations. Given the complexity of the issues at stake, this ground-clearing exercise is vitally important.

The Conference also highlighted interesting regional experiences related to maritime and inland waterways co-operation -- in particular the Northern European experience and the Black Sea experience. As such, this has contributed to providing a framework for sharing information,

best-practices, expertise and know-how among the OSCE participating States, within and across regions.

A main objective of a preparatory Conference is to identify specific areas where the OSCE, as a security Organization, can provide added value. During the Forum process, we should aim to develop suitable recommendations for follow-up activities for participating States and OSCE institutions, and also to forge partnership with other relevant organizations.

The strength of the OSCE lies precisely here – in the Organization’s capacity to link up, build up and promote existing initiatives.

The Helsinki Conference has highlighted also the need for enhancing the implementation of existing norms and standards related to maritime and inland waterways co-operation. The implementation and enforcement of existing legal documents is of crucial importance. Certainly, the OSCE has experience to draw upon here. In this regard, we have noted also that co-operation with the UNECE should be further developed. Our dialogue with IMO should be developed into a real partnership.

The Conference has also stressed the vital role required by enhanced co-operation between different actors, including Government agencies, the private sector, international and regional organization, as well as NGOs. The OSCE is at its best when it acts as a generator of such networks for innovation.

Clearly, the OSCE can also be instrumental in stimulating synergies between various regional co-operation mechanisms. The experience gained in one region should be shared with other regions, and the OSCE can facilitate such processes. For instance, we learned about the proposal for a joint HELCOM/BSC project to address environmental pressures resulting from high density of shipping. This project would enhance partnership and contribute to the development of guidelines for rehabilitation and protection of the Black Sea, based on the examples from the Baltic Sea.

I think that we all agree that the OSCE should support such inter-regional cooperation projects.

In addition, let us note that the OSCE, together with its ENVSEC partners, has developed expertise and conducted a number of assessments of environmental threats. Perhaps this experience could be used with regard to risks assessments related to marine and inland waterways environments. This is a question to consider carefully.

Finally, capacity building, training and raising public awareness at national and regional levels are two other areas where follow-up activities could be envisaged.

These are just a few thoughts on the way ahead.

Please allow me to assure you that the Secretariat, together with the incoming Finnish Chairmanship of the OSCE, will study carefully the outcome of this meeting and will present its conclusions and proposals for future action to the OSCE bodies in Vienna for their consideration.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

By actively participating in this Conference, you have all contributed to the process of identifying the OSCE's potential contribution in the area of maritime and inland waterways co-operation. I wish to thank you for this.

As a final word, I wish to thank the incoming Finnish Chairmanship not only for their warm hospitality, but also for their excellent co-operation with the Secretariat in preparing this event.

My thanks go to all for their support and contribution - to the OSCE Delegations taking part, the International Organizations, NGOs and Academics, business representatives, OSCE Economic and Environmental Officers.