



## **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

**Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic  
and Environmental Activities**

**Piraeus, 17 September 2008**

### **UNECE Conference on Hinterland Connections of Seaports: The Role of Seaports as a Link Between Inland and Maritime Transport**

**Opening Statement by Mr. Bernard Snoy,  
Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities**

Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Distinguished Participants,

On behalf of the **Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe**, the OSCE, I would like to, at the outset, express my gratitude to the organizers of this conference, H.E. Mr. Anastassis Papaligouras Minister of Mercantile Marine, The Aegean and Island Policy of Greece as well as Mrs. Eva Molnar, Director of the UNECE Transport Division and her able team for the excellent organization of this **“Conference on Hinterland Connections of Seaports: The Role of Seaports as a Link Between Inland and Maritime Transport”**.

The OSCE is the largest regional security organization. With a membership of 56 participating states, the OSCE covers the entire pan-European area as well as Central Asia and includes also the USA and Canada. Next year it will be chaired by Greece. The OSCE has three dimensions: politico-military, human and economic and environmental. In the third dimension, the OSCE attaches great importance to its cooperation with the UNECE and follows with great interest the activities of UNECE in the transport sphere.

**Now, why is the OSCE as a political and security organization interested in transport?** The reason is that transport raises very important security issues and that

enhanced transport security requires also enhanced co-operation between the 56 OSCE participating States, including as concerns the trade and transport facilitation aspects of border security and management. As some of you may be aware, in 2006, the OSCE Economic Forum process under Belgian Chairmanship focused on transport development and cooperation and on transport security. The UNECE and notably the members of its Transport Division actively participated to this Forum process and made significant contributions.

I am pleased to see that ever since, the cooperation between the OSCE and the UNECE has been significantly strengthened. Based on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the both of our Organizations I believe our cooperation to be an interesting example of how two International Organizations add value to each other's work and enhance complementarities.

While transport security was prominent on our Organization's agenda in 2006, I would like to bring to your attention two specific follow-up activities to that year's Forum process – **quite relevant also in the context of this conference**:

In October 2006 in Antwerp, my Office together with the Port of Antwerp and with the support of the International Labour Office (ILO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) held a seminar on strengthening the implementation of the **ILO/IMO Code of Practice on Security in Ports**. Participants, representing Black Sea and Caspian Sea Port Authorities discussed port security assessments and security plans called for by the Code and made some on-site visits to a container terminal and a veterinarian inspection site.

In the same month, my office in close cooperation with the Norwegian Government held in Tonsberg, Norway a **Workshop on Transport, Security and Environment**. Representatives from the Black Sea, Caspian Sea and Arctic regions exchanged views and shared experiences as well as expertise to find ways to reduce the potential environmental and security-related risks of transport.

The success of both meetings proved that the OSCE as a **platform for dialogue** can help to overcome obstacles of a political nature, can raise awareness on existing legal

instruments, norms and standards and can facilitate the exchange of experiences and expertise among its participating States.

Another issue that received due attention during the 2006 Forum process was the **special needs and challenges of OSCE landlocked developing countries** (particularly in Central Asia, South Caucasus and adjacent regions).

At the concluding session of the 2006 Forum in Prague, the five Central Asian participating States issued a joint statement in which they highlighted the “indivisible link between trade and transport” and emphasized that “the absence of territorial access to the sea and high transit costs impose serious restrictions on their socio-economic development”. **This statement is quite significant as regards the topic that we will be discussing over the next two days.**

Based on this and on the recommendations of the Forum process, the 56 OSCE participating States adopted at the Ministerial Council meeting in Brussels in December 2006, Decision No. 11/06 on the “**Future Transport Dialogue in the OSCE**”. This Decision (which is accessible on the OSCE website) provides our Organization with a strong mandate for continued activities in the field of transport and especially with regard to addressing transit transportation issues in OSCE landlocked countries.

Further to the adoption of this MC Decision, my Office organized in October of last year together with the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, a **Conference on Trans-Asian and Eurasian Transit Transport Development through Central Asia**. This conference brought together Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Senior Officials from customs, transport and trade Ministries from landlocked developing countries in Central Asia and South Caucasus as well as senior representatives from various International Organizations.

In short, the Conference aimed at raising awareness and enhancing political dialogue on the development of transit transportation in and through Central Asia, including the neighbouring OSCE participating States and Asian Partners for Cooperation – notably Afghanistan and Mongolia – and to take stock of the progress made in the

implementation of the **Almaty Programme of Action** (APA) – a UN endorsed programme aimed at addressing the challenges faced by landlocked developing countries across the globe.

Following the Conference deliberations, a **Joint Dushanbe Statement** was agreed upon by the delegations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Mongolia, participating in the conference.

The text of the statement, which is available on the OSCE website, covers *inter alia* key issues related to fundamental transit transport policies; transport infrastructure development and maintenance; trade, transit and transport facilitation and public private partnerships.

**Finally, and this is an element I would really like to emphasize, the Joint Dushanbe Statement highlights the importance of ‘building partnerships’, partnerships between OSCE landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbors – which offer access to vital seaports – but also between landlocked countries and other members of the international community (whether this be Donors, International Organizations or International Financial Institutions). When it comes to forging these ‘partnerships’, the OSCE stands ready to play its role as a catalyst, a platform bringing together various stakeholders.**

This year (and this shows there is continuity in our activities and priorities), the OSCE in the framework of the 16<sup>th</sup> Economic and Environmental Forum under Finnish Chairmanship focused on “**Maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the OSCE area: Increasing security and protecting the environment**”. In this context it reverted to the issue of transit transportation and revisited the challenges faced by landlocked developing countries in our region thereby building further on the conclusions and recommendations of the above mentioned meetings.

As a first immediate follow-up initiative the Finnish Chairmanship together with the Government of Ukraine organized in Odesa, Ukraine, an **International Expert Conference on Safety of Navigation and Environmental Security in a Transboundary Context in the Black Sea Basin**. Participants in the meeting concluded, among others, that further work needs to be done to promote the

implementation of relevant international legal instruments produced by the IMO, the UNECE and others *and* that the OSCE together with partners has a significant role to play in developing oil spill preparedness and response activities in the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions.

A second immediate follow-up initiative (also building further on the work done in previous Fora) is the development of a **Joint OSCE/UNECE Handbook on Best Practices at Border Crossings**. The main purpose of the Handbook is to assist OSCE participating States in developing more efficient border and customs policies by promoting existing best practices in this field. The publication (which is expected to be ready by Spring 2009) will cover both *facilitation* as well as *security* aspects of borders and as **‘sea ports’ are also border-crossings** (involving customs and security procedures) we are very much open to your suggestions and input over the next two days. My colleague Roel Janssens will elaborate more on this handbook as well as on the OSCE support to the implementation of the Almaty Plan of Action tomorrow.

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants,

Let me end by assuring you once again of the continued involvement of the OSCE in transport related activities. In this regard we will continue to play the role of a facilitator, a political catalyst offering a platform for dialogue and co-operation among our participating States as well as among other stakeholders concerned. Whereas we are not the reference organization on these issues, our Organization is well placed to raise political awareness of problems and to foster trans-national co-operation between countries in our region. Political dialogue and regional co-operation are the niches where we as the OSCE can add value to already existing structures, processes and coordination mechanisms.

I thank you for your attention and I wish you fruitful deliberations and a vivid and result-oriented exchange of views and expertise.