



STATEMENT

**by Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Ambassador Andrej Benedejčič
at the Opening Plenary Session of the First Preparatory Conference
to the Fourteenth OSCE Economic Forum
"The Role of Transportation to Enhance Regional Economic Cooperation and Stability"
Dushanbe, 7 November 2005**

Mr. Chairman,

Mr. Prime Minister,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Colleagues,

Since its independence in 1991, Slovenia has engaged in a number of challenging foreign policy projects, with a view to actively contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. One of them was the non-permanent membership in the Security Council of the United Nations in 1998 and 1999. The most recent one is the current Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. It is therefore a great pleasure for me to address this conference as the representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, my Foreign Minister Dr. Dimitrij Rupel. On his behalf, I would especially like to express appreciation and gratitude to our host country Tajikistan, to the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities and to the OSCE Center in Dushanbe for the organization of this important event.

We have all gathered here with the goal of exploring and furthering our understanding of the complex issue of transportation from the economic, environmental and security perspectives. I am therefore confident that the conference will serve as an important contribution to the development of the transportation theme within the OSCE. It should provide insight into some of the most relevant transportation issues of both general concern and specific relevance to the OSCE participating States.

In this connection, I would like to recall the focus of this year's OSCE Economic Forum on the issue of "Demographic Trends, Migration and Integration of Persons Belonging to National Minorities". The central characteristic of the "migration-integration" theme of the Slovenian OSCE Chairmanship was its cross-dimensional approach, which linked politico-military, economic-environmental and human aspects of security. In this sense, I wish to commend the incoming Belgian OSCE Chairmanship for suggesting the theme of transportation as the central concern of the 2006 Economic Forum cycle. Just like the "migration-integration" focus, the transportation theme bears similar potential for the efficient cross-dimensional linkages and action. The European Union, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the Eurasian Economic Community, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank and other international political and financial institutions have already exerted tremendous efforts to elaborate and pursue innovative policy responses to transportation concerns. The OSCE undoubtedly also has its role in these international endeavors, especially in promoting enhanced transportation policies with the goal of fostering regional economic cooperation and stability.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Transportation is the basis for economic development and represents one of the fundamental cross-sectoral communication channels. The construction and maintenance of transportation infrastructure also offers considerable job opportunities and can contribute significantly to a country's economic growth. This is certainly the experience of Slovenia, which embarked on an ambitious project of completion and upgrading of its highway grid after independence. The development of transportation is therefore a challenge and a responsibility, but it also provides important opportunities to all of the OSCE participating States. Decisions taken in this sphere today can determine conditions for the functioning of businesses and the lives of people in the OSCE area for decades. It is therefore important that we find solutions, which would be mutually acceptable, as well as feasible in the long run.

The OSCE, in collaboration with other specialised agencies and financial institutions, could therefore provide participating States with assistance in formulating more appropriate transport policies, particularly in the domains of legal order and legislation. It could furthermore offer assistance in devising relevant national spatial strategies, since we must find ways to ensure a more efficient use of the settlement concentration and optimum locations of productive capacities. The Organization could also offer support to individual participating States in stimulating public

interest in that sphere of transportation, which is linked with social and ecological issues. One of the OSCE's potential tasks could be to provide assistance in developing basic mobility possibilities for the reasons of education and work as well as for accessing health and patient care.

Finally, in the light of the follow-up activities to this year's "migration-integration" focus promoted by the Slovenian OSCE Chairmanship, the OSCE could, in collaboration with partners in its field presences, assist interested participating States in setting up a model of information collection about transportation flows in all the transport systems, which is required for an efficient monitoring and oversight of the migration flows.

Before concluding, I would like to say that the choice of the transportation theme for the 2006 Economic Forum cycle demonstrates the potential and enduring value of the OSCE's second basket. This is especially important this year, when much of the effort of participating States is focused on increasing the effectiveness of the Organization, with a view to adapting it to new needs and challenges. In fact, in his address to the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna on January 13 my Foreign Minister emphasized the following agenda as the guiding principle of this year's Chairmanship: "revitalize, reform, rebalance". It is therefore important that once again a topic was found in the economic and environmental dimension, which is of value to all the participating States. Needless to say, such a message is all the more significant one month before the OSCE Ministerial Council in Ljubljana.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The theme of the conference, the high level of attendance by representatives of participating States, international organizations, financial institutions, academia and NGOs promise fruitful deliberations. On behalf of the Chairman-in-Office, I therefore wish you a productive and rewarding exchange of views.

Thank you.