

Dear respected Ladies and Gentlemen, the respected ambassadors and representatives of the respective European institutions, especially the respected OSCE`s Secretariat being the host of this our meeting!

It is my great honor to be given this possibility to attend this very important conference during which I may present both the basic directions and the achievements accomplished so-far in relation to the concept of border security and management in the Republic of Macedonia, as well as the respected OSCE`s contribution within the framework of this process being effectuated in the field of developing the cross-border and trans-frontier co-operation, the institution and capacities building and the reinforcing of mutual confidence not only in the region but also in the broader area.

On the very beginning of my presentation, please allow me to make a short reference to the overall process of developing Europe as a *field of freedom, movement and justice*, which represents one of the most important integral parts, foundations and assumptions of the modern European public order. In this regard, of special importance is the border management which includes a variety of activities being undertaken by all relevant state agencies. This has an important strategic role in preventing the trans-border crime and other threats against the public security and safety.

The possible border violations may be very different, including the smuggling of persons, animals, articles, drugs, dangerous substances, weapons and the likely. Their prevention represents a very complex activity since the involved authorities are expected to achieve a very delicate balance between ensuring "tight controls" in relation to the criminal activities (*on the one side*) and ensuring "fully open borders" for both the trade and movements of persons (*on the other side*). It is precisely just within the framework of achieving this "balance", where appears the most important key category of "an integrated border management", and the aim of which consists of ensuring open but controlled and secure borders. The latter includes a proper and comprehensive co-ordination of the individual activities undertaken by all relevant ministries / agencies involved in the border related activities. Taking this into account, we can freely say that both the improving and the reinforcing of the concept of border security and management, as well as the developing trans-border co-operation and dialogue, are also representing the biggest challenge for all of us since the crime control is not anymore a task, which may be easily resolved only within the framework of the national borders.

Furthermore, and in the above context, we should also stress the great importance of ensuring a proper complementarity between the activities being undertaken by all relevant European intergovernmental organizations, including especially the respected Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). All of us we agree that the proper and efficient border management is of special importance in combating terrorism, organized crime and illegal migration, as well as for the internal security, the latter being of the most fundamental importance for the very ordinary citizens¹. In this

¹ The states should develop a wide series of measures, including the improved security features of both the visas and the travel documents, as well as the reinforcing both the controls and surveillance of the external borders through an improved co-ordination and joint actions.

regard, I would like just to stress the OSCEs commitments as reflected in (*among others*) the Helsinki Final Act, Helsinki Document 1992, Istanbul 1999, OSCE Charter on Preventing and Combating Terrorism and the other relevant Ministerial Council Decisions.

The building-up of efficient border management is one of the most fundamental complex challenges not only of the European intergovernmental organizations, but also of the individual states in the region of South-eastern Europe.

In this regard, I would like in particular to emphasize the great role of the relevant European intergovernmental organizations and their inputs in terms of supporting the following:

- individual national strategies for IBM and their implementation according to the respective EU`s relevant standards on IBM, and
- regional co-operation in the field of IBM.

In the case of the Republic of Macedonia, both the promotion and the establishment of open but simultaneously secure and well-controlled borders are also one of the basic strategic State objectives. In this direction, and by means of using the experiences of the West European countries, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia adopted (in December 2003) the National Strategy on Integrated Border Management. The very Strategy led to creation of the preconditions for further progress in this field. One of the basic aims of this Strategy is to create a Border Police as a professional service within the framework of the Ministry of the Interior, and the task of which would be to efficiently secure and control the state border crossing². Furthermore, an Action Plan on implementing the IBM-related National Strategy is presently drafted, which is expected to be finalized by the end of July 2004. These activities are funded and supported by the European Agency for Reconstruction, through the national CARDS-programs, in the direction of creating and developing an operative power of the Border Police.

The activities of the competent structures in the Republic of Macedonia are aimed at reforming of the border management, transferring of the border control by the Ministry of Interior from the Ministry of Defence, reinforcing of the Border Police`s executive power, as well as establishing the relevant inter-ministerial co-operation, according to the planned timetables. The National Coordinative Mechanism on Border Management, which is to be created and which will be managed by the Border Police in co-operation with the competent ministries, services and institutions, will ensure a co-operation, co-

² The Border Service has been established on 07th May 2004, as a single structure, the competences of which include the control of the state border crossing, the state border`s surveillance and control. Being placed within the organizational structure of the Interior Ministry, the Border Service is a Department within the framework of the Public Security Bureau.

ordination, joint support and exchange of information between the aforesaid actors. The complex process of activities is managed and co-ordinated by both the National Co-ordinator and the Inter-ministerial Working Group, which were formed at the end of the year 2002 and which is composed of representatives of the competent ministries.

In addition to the above, in relation to the legislation-related changes and the adaptations towards the European standards, the National Assembly has adopted (on 24th March, 2004) the changes and the amendments of both the Law on Internal Affairs and the Law on State Border Crossing and Movement in the Border Zone and which created the legal basis for both the establishing of Border Police and the transfer of competences relating the securing of the state border from the Ministry for Defense to the Interior Ministry. Furthermore, a new Law on State Border Control and Surveillance is also underway, and which will precisely define the status and the competences of the Border Service, the surveillance and the control of the state border crossing.

As seen from the long-term perspective of developing a proper European Border Service, a great emphasis is also presently put on the education and training of the Border Service's staff. In this regard, the first extra-training courses for the Ministry for Defense's staff in the field of performing the tasks of securing the state border took place as from 1st February to 30th April 2004. The trained 280 persons are included in the Border Service's structure, and they are assigned along the line of the Macedonian "southern" border towards Greece. Furthermore, as from 10th May 2004 the second training course for totally 300 future border policemen has started in the Macedonian Police Academy. The staff's training and education would be carried out until the year 2006, when the optimal number of the Border Service's staff should be achieved. With a view to achieving a higher level of professionalism and training and education, as well as complying to the standards and recommendations as contained in the Schengen Catalog of Best Practices, the staff (once finalized the basic course) will be additionally trained through organizing specialist courses and seminars in certain fields relating the border work, and simultaneously there will be also additional training and education while they perform their work on their assigned working posts.

Furthermore, the greatest part of the police work will be carried out in the local police areas, that is regions (4), and for which there shall be established regional co-ordinative centres (4) being competent in relation to the state border sections towards Greece, Bulgaria, Albania and Serbia and Montenegro, individually. Both the Border Service's National Centre and the regional centre for the southern border are already functional ones, and the transfer process of securing the southern border towards Greece has been already finalized.

In accordance with the National Strategy, the dynamics of transferring the competence relating to border management is expected to be finalized by December 2005. It has also to be underlined that the needs of material-technical means (equipment, facilities, etc) have been already defined, and the developing of projects on telecommunication and IT-related systems for supporting the Border Police's work is also underway.

While mutually complementing each other, the aforesaid processes related to the Integrated Border Management are being implemented simultaneously in accordance with the EU's relevant standards, taking also into account the other European countries' experiences.

The OSCE's role and contributions in enhancing mutually beneficial inter-State co-operation and capacity building are particularly focused (among others) on the following activities:

- i). *the Ohrid border process*
- ii). *organizing seminars in the field, and*
- iii). *providing for different forms of training and education.*

In the above context, the OSCE's active contribution and assistance within the framework of the ***Ohrid border process*** represent a very important effort being undertaken in co-operation with other similar international initiatives in the field of border security and management. Consequently, it also expresses the commitments of all relevant intergovernmental organizations to assist the participating and beneficiary countries being involved in this process. The *Ohrid border process* reflects also the strong commitment of both the Republic of Macedonia and the other countries of region to undertake accelerated reforms in the field of the border management and to associating into the European integrative process. Namely, in developing a coherent and harmonized approach, the Ohrid regional conference on border management and security has opened the serious process of achieving the following key political aims:

- establishing open but controlled and secure borders through improving the efficient systems on border management and a close co-ordination between the police border control units and the military units, according to the needs during the transitional period of time;

- improving the further stabilization of the region through reinforcing the rule of law, institutional capacity and reinforcing the regional co-operation, and

- providing support by the institutions of the EU, NATO, OSCE and the Stability Pact for South-eastern Europe to the countries of the region in developing their national policies and strategies on integrated border management and security.

To achieve the abovementioned aims as contained in the common platform, the countries of region have agreed to jointly create the road towards through realization of the identified concrete and specific measures, and they are also obliged to develop instruments to realize the national policies and strategies on border management, while respecting the principles of efficiency, democratic control and implementation.

Efficient border securing necessarily entails the need of a good trans-border co-operation with both the neighboring countries and the other European countries, as well as in a broader region. In this regard, I strongly consider that the respective OSCE's efforts being aimed at reinforcing both the trans-border co-operation and exchange of experiences in the transformation of the border securing, are of a great benefit for us since we are in the very starting stage of the border securing's transformation and since we are given the possibility to accept the positive experiences of the other states.

Furthermore, and taking into account the abovementioned, one should also emphasize the great importance of the series of seminars which are being organized by the OSCE –the Secretariat in Vienna, the basic aim of which is reinforcing the trans-border co-operation between the countries of South-eastern Europe³.

Lastly, one should also emphasize the great importance of the variety forms of education and training for the Border Police's staff, which are being provided for by the OSCE.

In the light of the abovementioned, I would like to conclude my presentation by underlining the importance of the following points:

- ***further implementation of the national IBM-related strategies of the countries of the region*** (in terms of implementation of the Ohrid Border process);

- ***the conclusion of agreements on trans-border co-operation*** (as a positive step towards establishing secure borders, and which is simultaneously a possibility for developing a co-operation at the lower operative level, that is at that level where the co-operation is necessary in preventing the trans-border crime);

- ***follow-up and reinforcing the relevant international assistance*** including that one of the respective OSCE as to the aforesaid two items;

All of the abovementioned will lead (among others) to reinforcing the combat against illegal migration, trafficking in human beings, organized crime, terrorism and other forms of trans-border crime, and which should also be placed on the top of the action agenda of the border services.

³ This series of seminars started with the initial meeting as was held in Vienna during February 2004, and so far there were organized two seminars in Dubrovnik and Sofia. The fourth seminar from this series of seminars has been held in Skopje (15-16th June 2004) on the topic "***Agreements on Trans-border Co-operation between the Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Serbia and Montenegro and the UNMIK and Greece***", which was also of a great benefit for all of participating states since during it the participants would be given possibility to obtain practical and theoretical knowledge as to the shape, form and contents of the agreements on trans-border co-operation, which are already concluded between the countries from the region, and which the Republic of Macedonia would also have to sign during the forthcoming period with its all neighboring countries.