



**Introductory remarks by Amb. Janez Premože, Chairman of the Ohrid
Process on Border Security and Management**

Fourth Review meeting

**8-9 November 2006
Podgorica, Republic of Montenegro**

Dear Mr. Veljovic,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends,

It is a great pleasure to be here today in Podgorica, for the Fourth Review meeting of the Ohrid Process on Border Security and Management.

I would like to start by thanking the hosts of this important event, namely the Ministry of Interior from the Republic of Montenegro, and especially its representative here today, the Head of the Police Directorate, Mr. Veselin Veljovic, for providing us with such excellent facilities and organisation. And I would also like to thank the representatives from the six Western Balkan countries and the four Partner Organisations, as well as DCAF and UNMIK for coming to this meeting.

Since the last Review meeting in Sarajevo in November 2005, a number of important things have happened in the framework of the Ohrid Border Process. We all remember that the key words for 2006 were "implementation and assessment". Well, on these two words, we can report some progress.

One of the key objectives of the Ohrid Border Process is to bring countries involved to work together, share information and experience, create formal and informal networks that can be used in various circumstances and act on the operational level together. Cross-border cooperation is one of the pre-conditions for EU integration, and one of the founding principles of the Ohrid Border Process. Seeing representatives from the six Western Balkan countries around the table today, as it has been the case since the process started in 2003, is only part of the evidence that large progresses have been achieved in this area. We will continue working along this line. However, today is even more special for the objectives of the Ohrid Border Process. Indeed, around the table today are sitting representatives from the Customs administration. This is also the evidence, first that the Ohrid Process is reaching another phase by adopting a more integrated approach towards all the services involved in border management, and second that inter-agency cooperation is progressing in all the countries concerned.



The year 2006 has also been marked by the word “assessment”. Following the 3rd Review meeting, experts from the Partner Organisations met in the framework of a Working Group to draft a Questionnaire on the implementation of the Ohrid commitments, and this Questionnaire was then sent to the Border Police administration of the countries involved. The Stability Pact gathered all the replies and the Working Group drafted a report on this basis. This report was then discussed and approved at the Intermediate Review meeting in June this year. To my mind, this report represents a corner stone for the Ohrid Border Process, as it was the basis on which discussions on the future of the whole process were held. At the same meeting, and given the results of the report, countries and partner organisations agreed to recommend that the process be prolonged for another year, until the end of 2007.

The word assessment leads us to the first point of our Agenda today, the official endorsement of the one-year prolongation. This should only be a brief procedure, as both countries and organisations have already largely confirmed their readiness to continue the process, and confirmed its value. I am looking forward to continuing our work in this format, with even more ambitious objectives.

This meeting is taking place at an important point in time. The EU-Western Balkan JHA Ministerial meeting will take place on 17 November in Tirana and part of it will be dedicated to integrated border management. The results achieved in the framework of the Ohrid Process will therefore be closely looked at. Moreover, the Stability Pact will hold its Regional Table and Working Table meetings in Bucharest on 15-16 November, and this event will be mostly dedicated to the process of transfer of the initiatives to regional ownership. This concept, central for the EU integration should also be considered as core to the Ohrid Border Process. Indeed, no process can be considered successful and truly valuable if not marked by the political willingness and the technical cooperation of its core members. In parallel, I will be glad to report on the progresses achieved in the framework of the Ohrid Process to the participants of the Working Table III meeting, within the overall SP objective of stabilising and managing population movements. Finally, as we spoke about assessment and progress, I am glad to hear that Serbia has announced that its Border Police has taken over the control of the border towards Croatia, and that according to national plans, the Border Police should take over the borders to Macedonia and BiH by the end of this year.

The other objective of today’s discussions will be deriving from our decision to continue the process. Indeed, we will need to look at ways to make the process an even more useful tool for international cooperation and coordination, and for assistance. In this respect, and on the basis of the assessment report, the partner organisations drafted a “Roadmap for 2006-2007”, meaning a list of key areas that each country should focus on in the coming period. This document, once approved, will help us in adopting a more tailor-made approach, as recommended at the Intermediate review meeting in June. The main issues covered are, according to each county:

1. Completing the handing over of the border control to civilian authorities



2. Adopting, improving and implementing National integrated border management strategy and action plan
3. Improving and implementing the legal and judicial frameworks
4. Practical training
5. Promoting and exchanging best practices amongst regional partners, especially on practical training
6. Developing information technology and telecommunication

I am looking forward to our important and fruitful discussions today and now I would like to give the floor to our host, the Head of the Police Directorate, Mr. Veselin Veljovic.

Thank you very much for your attention.