



Working Table III Meeting **Sofia, 17 May 2005**

Statement by the Ohrid Border Process Chair, Ambassador Janez Premoze

As mentioned before, the achievements in the field of integrated border security and management became key points of the Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial dialogue between the EU and the countries of the Western Balkans during the last EU-WB Ministerial meeting on 2 December 2004 in Brussels. The establishment of border management systems in line with the EU acquis and the EU model for management of external borders is clearly one of the prerequisites for eventual integration into the EU.

Since the latest Working Table III meeting in Skopje in November last year, the partner organisations met several times during informal consultations. The five Western Balkan countries and the four international partners also met in Brussels in April. The main result of that meeting was that the five countries and the four partners agreed that the current framework of the Ohrid Border Process, as agreed upon and explained in the Way Forward Document, is sufficient to cover the period until the end of 2006. As a number of commitments taken during the Ohrid Conference in May 2003 still need to be implemented or further improved by the countries of the region, the first phase of the process cannot be closed down. Therefore, talking about the future of the process is talking about after 2006.

Addressing the future of the whole process should not prevent us from thinking of tomorrow, and one of the key objectives in the coming months will be the full implementation, including assessing the quality of measures taken in that respect, of the commitments taken by the countries of the region.

This is the reason why, in the light of the decision taken during the Second Review meeting in Tirana in October 2004, the countries and the partners agreed to hold a two-day event on 31 May – 1 June, in Vienna. On the first day, the intermediate Review meeting will take place, where the countries and the partners will discuss the reports delivered by the countries and assess the progress made since previous reports were produced in October. The second day will be devoted to a Brainstorming meeting where the participants will be able to share their views and ideas on the future of the whole process, starting with the period from now to the end of 2006, but also after 2006.

When thinking about after 2006, we will mainly discuss about the issues that the Ohrid process should cover in the future, i.e. deepening the current ones or adding new ones (for example: preventing illegal migration, enhanced cooperation among the different parts of police services, involvement of customs, etc.), but always keeping in mind the importance of achieving the full implementation of the first goals; the question of enlarging the process to other international partners could also be discussed and also the possibility of associating or connecting the Ohrid border process to other existing instruments or processes, such as EC CARDS or MARRI.

The countries and the partner organisations also agreed that the Third Review meeting should take place in November. The exact date and venue will be discussed during the meeting at the end of May.

To conclude, I would say that many things remain to be done, but the progress achieved so far and the fact that the process is recognised as a success story, should give confidence to the countries to continue moving forward on their way to complying with the EU standards, and should encourage the partner organisations to continue supporting the countries with all their available means.

Thank you