



STABILITY PACT FOR SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

Working Table III – Security Issues

Executive Summary of the 2nd Review meeting of the Ohrid Process on Border Security and Management Tirana, 26 – 27 October 2004

1) The four Partner Organizations and the countries of the Western Balkan region that attended the Ohrid Conference on Border Security and Management in May 2003 were invited to participate in this 2nd Review Meeting. Kosovo/UNMIK, which has been associated to the whole Ohrid Border Process, was invited to participate. The Geneva based Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) was also invited to observe the meeting (the list of participants is attached).

2) The Albanian Government hosted the meeting. In his welcoming remarks, the representative of the host country underlined that border security and management issues are closely linked with combating trans-border/organized crime, trafficking and threat of international terrorism. Therefore, when speaking about 'free and open borders', international community has to be aware of the risks stemming from the above-mentioned threats.

3) Ambassador Janez Premoze, the Chairman of the Working Table III of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe/Chair of the Ohrid Border process, chaired this meeting. On behalf of the participants, he thanked Albania for hosting this meeting and for providing this excellent facility.

4) The key purpose of this event was to discuss the presentations delivered by the five countries of the Western Balkan region on the Annual Reports on the implementation of the Way Forward Document. The Annual Reports had to be submitted to the Stability Pact office/Secretariat of the Ohrid Border Process by 15 October 2004. As stated by the Chair, the SP Office has received a majority of the reports in time and in the agreed format.

The four Partner Organisations, as well as UNMIK and DCAF delivered their updated information on their policies and activities regarding relevant aspects of border security and management.

5) The Stability Pact office will prepare – on the basis of the Annual Reports and the comments made by the four Partner Organisations at this meeting - a consolidated report on the implementation of the Way Forward Document, which will be considered at the Ministerial Meeting of Justice and Home Affairs in Brussels, on 3 December 2004, as well as at forthcoming ministerial or respective Partner Organisations meetings.

6) In his opening statement, Ambassador Premoze underlined *inter alia* that the implementation of the Way Forward Document as well as the Common Platform of the Ohrid Regional Conference on Border Security and Management continues to represent the basis for the activities in the framework of the whole process and is under constant review. One of the most 'visible' results achieved after 1 1/2 years, is the fact that the borders in SEE are now - with few exceptions - entirely under civilian control. The achievements in the field of border security and management are now the key points of the JHA ministerial dialogue between the EU and the countries of the Western Balkans. The establishment of border management systems in line with the EU acquis is one of the prerequisites for their eventual integration into the EU.

At the same time, as he stressed, the progress regarding the adoption and - most important - the implementation of the legal framework did not develop at the same pace throughout the region. Moreover, cross-border cooperation in the area of border management is taking shape unevenly and at different intensity. Some countries are also lagging behind as regards capacity building in the area of illegal migration.

In order to successfully implement the Ohrid Border Process 'commitments' and to keep its dynamics and effectiveness, the Partner Organisations have to be ready to continue sharing with the countries concerned how they would like to assist them in fulfilling their task, including eventual financial contribution to the implementation of the programmes.

As far as the role of the Stability Pact was concerned, the Chair informed that the Ohrid Border Process together with asylum, migration, refugee return and visa issues should be considered an integral part of the Stability Pact core objective on Managing and Stabilizing Population Movements. Relevant discussion on this issue will take place at the next SP Regional Table/Working Table III meetings in Skopje, on 17 – 19 November 2004. Following the establishment of the MARRI Regional Forum and the consequent signing of the Memorandum of Understanding in Tirana on 2nd of July, the establishment of the MARRI Regional Centre in Skopje is now well underway and shall be officially opened on 18th November.

7) During the debate, the participants had the opportunity to hear about a number of accomplishments in the process of implementation of the Way Forward Document from November 2003 until October 2004 (i.e. between the two Review Meetings).

When introducing the Annual Reports, the representatives of the five countries informed about the progress achieved in various areas of implementation of their 'Ohrid commitments' including various forms of cooperation with neighbouring countries in the framework of the Ohrid Border Process (incl. border services and police cooperation), creation of a legal framework in line with the EU acquis, i.e. implementing instruments/mechanisms - national strategies on integrated border management, on action plans and on development of relevant 'implementation' bodies/structures. As underlined by many participants,

continued international assistance (including a financial one) is needed, particularly in these areas. Assistance provided so far through the CARDS or PHARE programs/projects, including twinning projects, was highlighted as an excellent example in this respect. Other forms of international assistance, e.g. from USAID, were mentioned as well.

In this connection, some of the participants underlined the need for further progress regarding 'inter-institutional' cooperation within their respective countries, especially for further 'harmonisation' of relevant national legislation.

A lot of emphasis was given to technical modernisation of the border services including the IT systems (the national border management information systems) and relevant databases and the reconstruction of the border crossing-points. Some countries reported on progress in linking their national border management databases with the Interpol Data System.

Another important area covered in many interventions was the issue of border police training, especially – as reflected in some statements – the lack of human resources. In some cases capacity building in the area of illegal migration (incl. also the centres for asylum seekers) becomes a priority.

Some delegations briefed the participants about the continued process of taking over border policing functions from the armed forces in their respective country.

In some cases the process of border delimitation will have to be completed.

In general, all delegations from the countries concerned expressed their support to the Ohrid Border Process and to the cooperation in its framework.

8) The representative of Kosovo/UNMIK informed the participants about Kosovo/UNMIK's cooperation with its neighbours. This cooperation also includes border management and security area as well as cooperation in combating organized crime and illegal migration.

9) The four partner organisations provided the attendees with an update of their assistance:

Both the representatives of The Netherlands/EU Presidency and the European Commission (DG External Relations) reiterated their commitment to assist the countries of the region in the Ohrid Border Process. Moreover, the EC presented its preliminary comments concerning the methodology used in the reporting process (the tables) as well as regarding the substance of the Annual Reports. He reminded that indicative guidance was provided by the methodology, which the EU had developed in the area of combating organized crime in the SEE region.

Although overall assessment of these reports is rather positive, the 'level of accuracy' was not the same in all reports. Legal issues have been addressed, appropriate structures established and main border crossing points equipped at airport or along main pan European corridors. More

attention should however be given to training and IT systems, especially in the wider scope of interservice cooperation. In order to provide the beneficiary countries with more advice/assistance in the field of 'inter-service relationship', more information from their side would be needed. As far as the bilateral activities/cooperation are concerned, the EC positively assessed the relevant SP overview distributed to the attendees.

The OSCE representative informed the attendees about the implementation of the first phase of the OSCE SEE Cross-border Co-operation Program (OSCCP) started in February 2004. The OSCE contribution has been defined in terms of civilian aspects of training and advice to border police, assistance to and facilitation of institution building and promotion of regional-cooperation. The objectives of OSCCP Phase 1 had been met, and there was full agreement that the requirements identified during the assessment mission had been addressed in line with the wishes of the countries. The consultations with delegations on the program outline of the OSCCP Phase 2 started in Vienna. He also mentioned the important work carried out by OSCE's Missions in the region as they have also been active since the last Review Meeting held in November 2003, in accordance with the WFD.

NATO representative stressed the alliance attaches great importance to the implementation of the 'Ohrid commitments'. She provided the participants with a briefing about the "NATO Cross Border Communications Exercise", which was conducted in July 2004. The low-key one-day communication exercise between Serbia and Montenegro, KFOR, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and other countries of the Western Balkan Region has to be seen as a part of NATO's commitment to the Ohrid Border Process. The objective of the exercise was to test information systems in the above-mentioned countries with appropriate Border Security Agencies. Since this event was very successful, NATO is currently preparing another exercise - oriented on more operational aspects - to be conducted in spring/ summer 2005. In this context she underlined the need for countries support for this event.

On the side of the Stability Pact, Ambassador Premoze underlined that SP attaches great importance to cross-border cooperation. Therefore, SP WT III continues to work on the draft SP Concept for More Efficient Police Control of Main Border Crossings: Linking Border Police to Interpol's National Central Bureaus". He invited to identify the main crossing /checking points where this system could be implemented. The Stability Pact will continue its activities in other 'cross-border related' areas/initiatives related with combating organized crime and corruption, police cooperation, judicial and public prosecutors cooperation, trafficking in human beings (in cooperation with OSCE) and SALW.

Summing up this part of the meeting, the Chair highlighted that all Partner Organisations confirmed their readiness to keep supporting the Ohrid Border Process.

10) The representative of the Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) briefed the participants about DCAF's Border Security

Program in South Eastern Europe launched after the Ohrid Border Conference in Skopje in May 2003. As underlined, the main aim of this program was to introduce and share “EU experience” with the five countries of the Western Balkan region. As of the end of October 2004 the program reached approx. 50 border security officers and staff in each country. DCAF Advisory Board on Border Security has also been expanded. Finally, he informed that DCAF plans to continue facilitating this process, together with DCAF’s partners in SEE, until the end of 2006.

11) As far as training activities and regional cooperation in the field of border security and management were concerned, the Chair mentioned that these issues had been reflected in a majority of individual presentations. The representative of the WT III gave a short overview in particular on bilateral activities in the Western Balkans in the framework of the Ohrid Border Process. In this context, the SP draft matrixes (on the Implementation of the Way Forward Document and on Bilateral Activities) were distributed to all participants.

The EC representative emphasised the need to consider training issues in the framework of integrated border management. In the context of bilateral activities he stressed the importance of customs cooperation. DG TAXUD that is in charge of customs matters is ready to start cooperation with the countries of the region, in particular regarding risks analysis.

Participants agreed that - in spite of different status of the individual countries within the SaP process - continuity regarding the implementation of the ‘Ohrid commitments’ as well as relevant CARDS and PHARE programs has to be ensured.

12) Regarding the follow-up of this Review Meeting, Ambassador Premoze reminded the importance of two upcoming events: the SP WT III/RT meetings in Skopje on 17 – 19 November and the EU – Western Balkans JHA Ministerial meeting on 3 December. In this context, he strongly invited the countries of the region to provide the Stability Pact Office/Secretariat of the Ohrid Border Process with their additional inputs/comments in order to prepare a substantive annual report on the progress achieved in the Ohrid Border Process. Subsequently, this would put more focus on border security and management issues and would also reinforce regional ownership of the whole process.

All participants agreed that for 2005 the focus has to be put on the implementation of the existing ‘Ohrid commitments’. The representatives of the countries concerned informed the participants about their specific priorities for 2005 (in particular regarding the continuation of the process of taking-over border policing functions from the military, equipment/IT, border surveillance, human resources, regional/bilateral cooperation, training, integration with criminal police). For some countries visa issues will be equally important. At the same time, they stressed that the process of implementation will require relevant assistance from the four Partner Organisations. Ambassador Premoze, also on behalf of all Partner Organisations, reassured them that the partners would continue to provide necessary assistance.

The EC recommended concentrating on the four following points either in the OHRID process or in a different framework: (i) human resources and training, (ii) equipment/IT, (iii) complementarity and cooperation between border police services and criminal police, (iv) regional cooperation on border management and security. All these areas are directly linked with the future accession of the SaP countries to the Schengen area. The EC would be ready to support efforts on these points along with the Stability Pact Moreover, The Dutch/ EU Presidency representative underlined that all these issues will be emphasised during the above-mentioned JHA Summit on 3 December.

13) Since, in principle, all interventions mentioned the future of the Ohrid Border Process (i.e. *beyond 2005 when national capacities to implement border management stems would have been established and when it would be time to focus on establishing the operational capacities of these systems*), the Chair suggested to convene a special 'brainstorming' meeting early 2005 to discuss this issue. He invited all the participants of the Ohrid Border Process to share with the others their ideas on this question.

14) The participants welcomed the idea forwarded by the Chair to hold the 3rd Review Meeting in Skopje in 2005.

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SP WT III
3 November 2004