

REGIONAL MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Regional and Transnational Cooperation in the Fight against Organized Crime in South East Europe: Challenges and Achievements

Belgrade, 29-30 November 2011

STATEMENT OF DEPUTY MINISTER DIMITAR GEORGIEV

Session II: "The Best Practice Transfer in the Fight Against Organized Crime in the Western Balkans, with Special Emphasis on Drug Trafficking and High-Tech Crime" (29 November 2011, 15.45-16.45)

**Dear ladies and gentlemen Ministers,
Dear colleagues,**

It is an honour for me to represent the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior at this important regional conference and to congratulate you on behalf of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Mr. Tsvetan Tsvetanov.

The fight against crossborder organized crime is a key priority in the work of the Bulgarian law-enforcement authorities. Taking into account the increasingly crossborder nature of crime, especially in the field of drug trafficking and high-tech crimes, we give great importance to the cooperation with our partners and we consistently work on improving it and achieving specific results.

The present conference presents a good opportunity to exchange national experience and also to discuss the achievement in the fight against drugs on regional level and in the context of the latest developments of the European policy in this field.

Bulgaria participates actively in the implementation of the two key initiatives on EU level – European Pact on Combating International Drug Trafficking from 2010 and the newly approved European Pact against Synthetic Drugs. From the point of view of the location of South East Europe, the emphasis on the cooperation with the countries of origin and transit, especially in the “Heroin Routes” section, is particularly important for Bulgaria. In this context, the problems with the traffic of heroin from Afghanistan and in the opposite direction – traffic of precursors for its production, remain topical.

The joint activities with a number of South East European countries along the so called “Balkan Route of heroin” from Afghanistan, with which we traditionally have good cooperation in the fight against drug trafficking, are of key importance for the Bulgarian side. Along with this, the Bulgarian authorities work in close cooperation with Europol and Interpol, the South East Law Enforcement Center (SELEC), US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). Bulgaria also contributes to the regional initiatives for the fight against heroin from Afghanistan in the framework of UN and NATO. Our

country is also a member of the international initiatives on narcotics with regional significance such as Dublin Group and the Paris Pact.

I would like to point out that we participate in 2 *international projects* related to drug trafficking in Southeastern Europe:

- In the framework of the *BESA* project organized by Interpol which started in January 2010 we exchange operational information on drug trafficking through SEE countries to Central and Western Europe and we conduct joint operations with Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Moldova. We have had joint realizations with Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Turkey.

- The project *Drug Policing Balkan*, with the participation of 27 countries from EU, Turkey, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, USA, Ukraine, Switzerland, as well as Europol, Euro just and Interpol, provides an opportunity for direct contacts at expert level among EU Member States, third countries and international organizations which improves considerably the exchange of information in real time, the planning of joint operations and the establishment of joint investigation teams.

The controlled deliveries are a very important mechanism for effective cooperation in the region and I believe that the results of this year are undisputable. If you allow me, I would like to give some examples:

- In November 2011 we conducted two very successful controlled deliveries – with Romania and Greece. A total of about 25 kg of methamphetamine and approximately 10 kg opium were seized and the perpetrators – 10 persons – were detained.

I would also like to point out the active work of the SELEC Anti-drug Trafficking Task Force which is coordinated by Bulgaria. The joint work of the relevant services, the conducted coordinated operations and exchange of information, are highly appreciated both by the partners and also by the observers at SELEC.

Dear colleagues, while reporting the good results, we are still aware that the improvement of the police cooperation is a continuous process which should be strengthened. Faced by the ever more mobile and flexible international drug traffickers, the traditional methods of investigation are no longer sufficient. For this reason we should envisage steps for improving the prevention, for dismantling the criminal drug schemes through financial investigation, fight against money laundering, counteraction to corruption and seizure of criminal assets.

The second topic in the programme emphasized by the organizers is no less important. At the present moment more and more public activities are transferred to the digital world due to the mass introduction of information technologies. Cybercrime has become a continuously growing crime field both with respect to the number of committed crimes and to the damages caused. For this reason the provision of cyber security has become a key challenge for the state, business and society both at national and international level.

The crossborder character of cybercrimes requires close international cooperation and also public-private partnership.

The Bulgarian authorities have successful realizations with partners from different countries in the field of countering the distribution of child pornography in the Internet, the distribution of protected objects of copyright by Internet providers and unregulated access to email addresses and profiles in different networks.

We give special attention to the specialized training of the officers working in this field. In 2010 with the support of *America for Bulgaria Foundation*, leading experts in the field of law-enforcement, business and science established in Bulgaria *International Cyber Investigation Training Academy*. The aim of the Academy is to improve the expertise of a wide range of experts in Bulgaria on the modern threats for the information society and to optimize the cyber investigations.

In the period March 2010 – June 2011 the International Academy already conducted the first joint trainings of representatives of the law-enforcement and judicial authorities in Bulgaria.

Another successful project of MoI, supported by the International Academy, is the first *Regional Conference in Southeastern Europe on Cybercrime and cyber Security* held in October 2011 in Sofia. Representatives of almost all countries from the region took part in Conference, together with our partners from Central Europe. Representatives of the main US law-enforcement agency also took an active part in this event – FBI, Secret Service, Department of Justice and Department of Homeland Security. Great interest in the Conference was expressed also by the business and NGOs.

The participants united around the idea of Bulgaria for the establishment of *a regional platform for support of cyber investigations*. Its main objectives are to stimulate and support the exchange of best practices among the law-enforcement authorities in the region and to create effective forms of public-private partnerships in the prevention of cybercrimes. Furthermore, we have the strong ambition to use the capabilities of the International Academy for joint trainings in the field of cyber investigation for police officers, prosecutors and judges from South East European region with the aim of improving the qualifications and cooperation at national and regional level.

Dear colleagues, the ideas that we exchange here today, the results that we share and also the steps that we outline for the future, prove that this is the right approach, and I am convinced that today's meeting will be beneficial for strengthening the contacts and the mutual thrust and in the end – for enhancing the practical cooperation.

Thank you for your attention!