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REPORT

On the conference organized in Athens on 31 of March 2006 on “The Problem of Illegal Drugs in the Balkans and the Contribution of the Balkan Countries and the International Community in Addressing the Problem”

On March 31st, 2006 the Andreas Papandreou Foundation organized a conference in Athens under the auspices of the Greek Chairmanship-in-Office of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) on “The Problem of Illegal Drugs in the Balkans and the Contribution of the Balkan Countries and the International Community in Addressing the Problem.”

The goal of the conference was to take stock of the activities of the responsible authorities of the Balkan countries, the involved countries of the European Union, the European Commission and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and to examine the future perspectives for coordination and cooperation on drug policy in the Balkan region. The conference took place during the Greek Presidency of the SEECP. The conference participants proposed to submit this report to the competent authorities of the SEECP and ask for the inclusion of the drugs issue as a priority in its activities.

It has been pointed out that the conclusions of the Thessaloniki EU-Western Balkans Summit (19-21/6/2003), where the orientation of the Western Balkans countries towards the EU was reasserted, the “Action Plan Against Drugs between the EU, the Western Balkan Countries and the Candidate Countries,” which had been adopted by the European Council in June 2003, constitute the main framework for the discussion. It was acknowledged that the action plan between the EU and the countries of the Balkan region against drugs has not yet taken concrete form and has still to be

implemented. Ideas and proposals were expressed at the conference in the hope that they may lead to initiatives for action.

The representative of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Michael Christides, Director of the Department of the Ministry responsible for Eastern Europe, said that the Ministry was happy and honored to have been able to place the initiative of the Papandreou Foundation under its aegis during the chairmanship of the SEECP, which lasts until the end of May 2006, at which point it will be taken over by Croatia. The Greek chairmanship has dealt very extensively with issues that concern the region, such as the one that the conference covered. As the problem of illegal drugs persists, the initiative taken was of high significance.

Participants at the seminar included Mr. Hervé Bougé of the Directorate General for Enlargement of the European Commission, who introduced the theme: “The fight against organized crime and drug trafficking: the actions of the European Commission in the Western Balkans. Mr. Bernard Frahi of the UNODC Partnership in Development Branch, Division for Operations, who made a presentation on “The Balkans and UNODC, Actions and Perspectives of Cooperation in the Balkan Region - the Paris Pact.” Mr. Alexis Goosdeel, Head of the Unit “Reitox and International Cooperation” of the EMCDDA who presented the theme: “The EMCDDA and its future cooperation with the Balkan Countries.” From the Balkan countries representatives participated from Croatia, Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia Herzegovina, FYROM, and Romania. From EU countries there were participants from Italy and Hungary. Participants from Greece were representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [Directorate for the Countries of South East Europe, Directorate for the UN and International Organizations and Conferences, the International Development Cooperation Department (Hellenic Aid) and the Office of the Greek chairmanship of SEECP], the Ministry of Public Order (Directorate on Narcotics), the Ministry of Economy and Finance (Customs Directorate), the President of the Organization Against Drugs (OKANA) Christos Giannakis, the National Coordinator for Drug Policy (Ministry of Health), Mr. Konstantinos Ballas, the Director of the Greek Reitox Focal Point of the EMCDDA, Mrs. M. Terzidou, the Director of the Therapy Centre for Dependent individuals (KETHEA), Mr. Pouloupoulos, the President of the bi-partisan Committee on Drug Policy of the Greek Parliament, Mr. Konstantinos Kiltidis, Mrs. M. Malliori, Professor of Psychiatry, University of Athens, Mr. D. Halkiotis, Director of the Andreas Papandreou Foundation and Mr. Martin Jelsma,

Coordinator of the “Drugs and Democracy” unit of the Transnational Institute, Amsterdam. Mr. Thanasis Apostolou, adviser on drug policy issues, was the moderator of the conference.

The program consisted of two parts. In the first part presentations were held on behalf of the European Commission, the UNODC and the EMCDDA. In the second part the participants referred to initiatives of their respective organizations and made proposals for future plans and for regional cooperation. Mr. Hervé Bougé of the European Commission pointed out in his presentation that the EC has not yet developed for the Balkan region specific actions on the issue of drugs. There are some initiatives at the national level, but an integral program on drugs for the region is lacking. One of the reasons for this situation is the strategy that is followed by the Commission. One of the main priorities of the European Commission is, in the framework of the Stabilization and Association Process, strengthening the administrative capacity of the Western Balkan states. That means that the countries in the Balkan region must have the capacity to plan and implement themselves programs and activities. This guarantees continuity, long term planning and ownership. Drugs as an issue are not ignored. On the contrary capacity building and especially institutional capacity building is needed for planning and implementation of actions. In this framework there are two areas where actions have been developed. First of all is the ‘twining’ programs, where a country in the Balkan region has an agreement with a country of the EU for concrete cooperation with exchange of experts, seminars etc. on a certain topic. The European Commission supports financially such initiatives for one or for two years. An example of ‘twining’ is a project on drugs with Croatia supported by the CARDS program which will start in May 2006. The other possibility for action is technical assistance. This happens upon request of a country. These activities are mostly related to legislative questions, where through seminars and expertise the necessary know how is provided.

The most recent projects (implementation in 2006-2007) of cooperation between the European Commission and the Balkan Countries concern three initiatives:

-The program for improvement of the international cooperation between the police and the customs authorities in cooperation with the SECI Center (South European Cooperative Initiative). The perspective is to establish a cooperation agreement between SECI and EUROPOL. SECI must be

supported in this effort. A cooperation agreement with EUROPOL will be a significant progress.

-The development of National Platforms of the law enforcement authorities in the five Balkan Countries: Croatia, Albania, FYROM, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia Montenegro.

-The development of monitoring instruments and the collection of data, in cooperation with EMCDDA on the basis of common indicators.

-We must mention also the initiative of the Austrian presidency to draft a convention on police cooperation according to the model of the Schengen agreement. The convention concerns six countries (Moldova, Romania, Albania, FYROM, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia-Montenegro). It is planned to be signed in May 2006 during the Ministerial Conference which will be held in Vienna (May 4-5, 2006). This convention is a significant step enhancing the cooperation of the law enforcement authorities in the Balkan region. The European Commission is supporting this effort and will finance its implementation.

The representative of the directorate for South Eastern Europe of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Mr. M. Christides pointed out that from a broad political point of view the drug issue has become an issue of major importance. In the late 80s and beginning of the 90s, the Balkan States were transit areas for drugs towards Western and Northern Europe. Today the region of South Eastern Europe is a transit area as well as a destination and origin of drugs. The increased number of drug addicts and the activities of criminal groups are a proof and consequence of these developments. It cannot come as a great surprise that as the number of drug related offences has dramatically increased as well as the drug trafficking groups and networks originating from South East Europe. It is well known and also indicative that criminal groups in the EU countries have extensively used trafficking routes through the Balkans in the early 90s exploiting the conflict and the unrest in the region. At the same time it looks almost logical that the transition period through which most of countries went and which in many cases was particularly painful and difficult for the local societies, forced many social groups, especially young people and unemployed, to connect themselves with illegal activities related to drug trafficking. The resulting damages of this situation to the social structure and cohesion are persisting even today and threaten the citizens in their everyday security.

Therefore it is more than natural for countries in the region to try to address the situation both with internal measures but also with a broader regional

cooperation. One the latest important meetings of SEECP was that of the home and justice ministers in February this year, where important decisions were taken for cooperation between the countries themselves and also among other related international institutions. The international assistance and cooperation from the UN and the European Commission is more than welcome, because while the countries in the region focus their efforts in combating this scourge of our societies today, the financial resources are not enough to face effectively the problem. Mr. Christides concluded by saying that the countries in the Balkans pay great attention to these issues on the national, regional and international level because this problem of organized crime and drug dependency is leaving a scar in our society and it is a problem that we as citizens, as society and as state have to face with open mindedness and a long term strategy.

In his presentation, Mr. Bernard Frahi stated that over the past 15 years the Balkan countries have moved from conflicts and bloodshed onto reconstruction and stability. This is a positive sign. Yet faster and broader progress in the Balkans towards stability depends on the capacity of the Governments to ensure security and to combat effectively the challenges emerging by drug trafficking, organized crime and corruption. The Balkan region has become a major hub for traffickers of heroin and other types of drugs originating from Afghanistan. Besides there is an increase in human trafficking and money laundering. It has been estimated that 70% to 90% of the heroin found in Europe has been processed from opium in Afghanistan. Afghan's opiates have traditionally been trafficked along the so-called "Balkan route" (Afghanistan-Pakistan-Iran-Turkey-Balkan countries-West Europe).

Mr. Frahi described the development related to the production of opium from Afghanistan. After a significant reduction of the production during the Taliban period, there is now a considerable increase. According to the UNODC poppy survey undertaken in 2002 it was estimated that 74.000 hectares were cultivated with the potential for producing 3.400 metric tones of opium. In 2003 Afghanistan produced 3.600 metric tones of opium or a 6% increase. In the latest report in 2005, it was estimated that the opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan decreased by 21% from about 131.000 hectares in 104.000 hectares. However, due to an increased yield, the total opium production was reduced by only 2% in 2005. For 2006 the indications are disturbing. The Afghan farmers have already planted crops on a scale

equal to or exceeding that of 2005. An increase is expected in 13 of the 32 provinces in 2006.

As for the trafficking of heroin from Afghanistan, Mr. Frahi pointed out that there are three main routes through the Balkans: across Romania, Serbia and FYROM. The trade of Afghan-grown drugs alone brings in over two billion euros for those cartels that operate along the so-called Balkan route. Principal destination countries through the Balkan routes are since 2002 Germany, Austria, and Western Europe at large. Heroin generally comes in via Turkey concealed in containers/commercial vehicles into the southern part of the Balkan region. It is off loaded in controlled conditions and leaves the Balkan region concealed in other ways – cars, light commercial vehicles, buses and persons. The traditional Balkan Route of Istanbul-Sofia-Belgrade-Zagreb-Ljubljana is now becoming more viable for licit transport since it is the shortest and with the improvement of infrastructure becomes the fastest and therefore the most cost effective for business users. With the licit comes also illicit trafficking. The involved countries need to be vigilant and to improve control mechanisms.

From a comparison of heroin seizures in the countries of the region between 1995-1999 and 2000-2004, it emerges clearly that with the exception of Romania, all other countries have shown a significant increase. Particularly dramatic is the situation in the case of Bulgaria, which has registered the highest level of seizures. From 1999 to 2002 there have been significant seizures of heroin in the countries along the Balkan route and in particular some very big amounts were seized in ports along the Black, Mediterranean and Adriatic seas.

Important was the reference of Mr. B. Frahi to the production of heroin in Afghanistan. Until 2001 the export proportion was relatively equal between opium and heroin. Since 2001 more heroin than opium is being exported from Afghanistan, hence suggesting that for the processing up to 10.000 tons of chemical precursors are required. None of those chemicals needed are produced in Afghanistan. They are obtained legally in Europe/Middle East and Asia and then diverted into the illicit market. There is currently limited intelligence on how these chemicals move within the region. However, it is worth mentioning that significant diversion takes place in the Balkan region.

Since 1995, UNODC in collaboration with the EC Phare program, developed a list of indicators to be complied with on drug control by all

candidate countries to the EU. In 1995, after the Dayton agreement, UNODC provided assistance to Bosnia Herzegovina and developed then in 1998 the strategy for a joint EC-UNODC cross-border cooperation project on the Balkans. In 2004, considering the complexity of the South Eastern Europe region, UNODC formalized and expanded the Field Operations Unit based in Sofia (Bulgaria). The projects of UNODC in the Balkans are mostly focusing on counter-narcotics enforcement. In particular the TADOC project on the “Strengthening of the Turkish International Academy against Drugs and Organized Crime” is one of the most significant projects of the UN in the region.

Mr. Frahi referred also to the initiative of the “Paris Pact.” The “Paris Pact” is an immediate outcome of the Paris Conference of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs which has been held in Paris in 2003 and was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France. The “Paris Pact” consists of two components. The first is a consultative mechanism that facilitates periodical consultations at the experts and policy levels between partners, in order to jointly discuss, identify and set in motion concrete measures to stem the increasing levels of heroin trafficked from Afghanistan. Seven Round Tables have been organized up to now in different regions affected by the trafficking of heroin from Afghanistan. The second main component is the development, trial, launch and use of the Automated Donor Assistance Mechanism (ADAM), an internet-based coordination mechanism for technical assistance. ADAM provides information on more than 300 projects on counter narcotics enforcement in Pakistan, Iran, Central Asia and South Eastern Europe.

In conclusion, Mr. Frahi announced that UNODC is also planning to undertake a Study on “Crime and Stability in the Balkans and affected countries.” The report of this Study will be the third highly analytical study on how crime interacts with other social dynamics in specific regions of the world. It will comprise an analysis of the social factors that make the area especially vulnerable to crime, including demographic and economic risk factors, as well as the history of conflict in the area, which is key for understanding how crime manifests itself in the Balkans today. This will of course be complemented by crime statistics and victim surveys, which are also indicators of “conventional crime” (murder, robbery, rape, etc). The subject of the investigation will in fact focus on the extent to which instability in the Balkans is cause and consequence of violence, crime, corruption and poor Governance and vice-versa, in the sense of crime as a

destabilizing factor. One of the main characteristics of the Study will be its action-oriented feature. A Plan of Action will follow the Study and will strengthen the existing programs in the Balkans. In particular, UNODC is working towards enhancing coordination with the EC, World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF, IOM, WHO, SECI Centre, OSCE, Stability Pact, Interpol and Europol. A similar report on organized and economic crime in South Eastern Europe has been developed by the EC. Despite the similarities the two studies differ profoundly in terms of focus and contents. In fact, the EC study is mainly of a descriptive nature and concentrates only on the region itself and not on the impact that this region is having on Europe as a whole, as well as other parts of the world. The UNODC report is expected to complement the EC study by also showing the impact of crime and corruption on governance and stability, and the relationship between citizens and the state. Following the publication of the report, UNODC and its partners will call for a Ministerial Round Table of affected and concerned countries to develop a Program of Action for the Balkans.

The presentation of Mr. Frahi gave rise to comments in relation to chemical precursors for the production of heroin. Mrs. Malliori noted that the approach to heroin production in Afghanistan is one-sided since it does not address the issue of the origin and diversion of precursor chemicals into Afghanistan. It could be argued that the production of opium in Afghanistan would not be of any value if there would not be supply of precursor chemicals. It is necessary that a serious examination of the policy of the EU and other western countries takes place in order to focus also on activities to combat the diversion of precursor chemicals. Mr. Kiltidis referred to the interest of the Greek Parliament for the situation in Afghanistan and announced that an invitation has been extended to the executive director of UNODC, Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, to visit Greece and discuss with the government authorities a more substantive involvement of Greece in combating heroin trafficking and organized crime in the region. Mr. Kiltidis raised also the issue of the proposal made by an NGO to provide Afghanistan with a license for legal production of heroin in order to be used for medical purposes. On this last question, Mr. Frahi answered that such a proposal has to be examined carefully, because on the one hand the availability of morphine for medical use in the world is sufficient and on the other hand a licensed production of heroin has to be accompanied by proper control mechanisms. This is not the case in Afghanistan at the moment. The countries that have a license for the production of opium/morphine have for this purpose proper control mechanisms.

Mr. Alexis Goosdeel, referring to the activities of the EMCDDA in the Balkan region recalled that there are 26 National Focal Points or national monitoring centers in the EU (one in each country and one in the European Commission). Together they form the REITOX network, which is the main partner of the EMCDDA for the data collection on drugs in the EU. Norway is also member of the EMCDDA since 2002. National Focal Points have been created also in Bulgaria and in Romania, and are in the process of being established or strengthened in Croatia and Turkey. The reference framework for the cooperation between the EMCDDA and the Balkan countries is made of the EU strategy on Drugs 2006-2012, the EU action plan 2005-2008 and the conclusions of the European Council of Thessaloniki of June 2003. Another important reference for the EMCDDA is the communication of the European Commission that followed the Thessaloniki summit, and which defines the modalities for the participation of Western Balkan countries in European Agencies.

For the Eastern European candidate countries the Phare program has been an important instrument, both as a direct support to these countries and through the Phare regional activities, which started in 1991-1992 with the Phare “Fight against Drugs Program.” The Phare program is also supporting the technical cooperation between the EMCDDA and the candidate countries from Central and Eastern Europe. Today countries like Bulgaria and Romania are supported through the third Phare-EMCDDA technical assistance project. In June 2006 a new technical assistance project will start with Croatia and Turkey. Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey have negotiated with the European Commission an Agreement for membership in the EMCDDA that should be signed soon.

The EMCDDA was invited to participate in a few meetings that were initiated in the region like the meetings organized by Croatia and Slovenia in Dubrovnik and Zagreb concerning the Balkan cooperation, and recently the seminar on drugs and drug prevention organized in Serbia Montenegro with the financial support of the European Agency for Reconstruction.

It is expected that a more formal cooperation could take place between the Western Balkan countries and the EMCDDA thanks to a technical assistance project that is expected to be approved and financed by the CARDS program. In the framework of this project, if it is accepted, the future activities of the EMCDDA in the Balkans will focus mainly on four areas:

1. The organization of joint assessment missions to evaluate the capacity and existing resources of the countries of the region to establish a national monitoring center and a national drug information network.
2. The organization of Reitox Academies for training and education of professionals who will be in charge of establishing a national focal point and to implement the EMCDDA key epidemiological indicators and other reporting tools, including the production of national reports following EU standards. At these meetings the issue of promoting cooperation is one of the topics of discussion.
3. The support to the organization of the national data collection system. EMCDDA will offer limited technical support to professionals and experts.
4. The Outputs. Every country will be supported in the preparation of a first national report on the drugs situation, following as much the EU guidelines, on the basis of the existing information. Strengthened coordination between the national experts and partners will be fostered for the analysis of data. The national reports will serve as a basis for preparing a first Regional Report on the Drug situation, based on the same model that has been prepared by the EMCDDA with the ten candidate Central-Eastern Europe Countries (CEEC's).

These activities are going to be implemented next year.

Further more 'twining' projects are and will be financially supported by the European Commission. For the moment, a 'twining' project has been concluded between Croatia and Germany, and another is being finalized between FYROM, Hungary and The Netherlands.

During a meeting which took place recently in Thessaloniki between the EMCDDA and the European Agency for the Reconstruction of the Balkans is has been agreed that the two EU Agencies will cooperate and exchange their information, as far as establishing national focal points and national drug information systems is concerned.

For next year, the EMCDDA envisages to organize a technical meeting with his National Focal Points (both EU and candidate countries) on the "Lessons learned from previous 'twining' experiences." 'Twining' projects have been organized and financially supported by the Commission since 2000 in this field (NFP building) and since persons are changing there is a danger to loose continuity and experience that is useful for setting up new projects of 'twining.' Another project that is discussed but it is not yet an official

program is the publication of a handbook with information and guidelines concerning the set up of monitoring centers. This project may probably be realized in cooperation with UNODC and with CICAD-OAS.

After the presentations, interventions of the participants took place. Mr. Pouloupoulos of the Therapeutic Center for Dependant Persons (KETHEA) referred to the large numbers of persons in prisons, due to offences related to drugs. This is a serious problem for the penitentiary system. The drug strategies for rehabilitation and reintegration of these persons in society must be improved. KETHEA has developed a program of cooperation with Bulgaria for the training of professionals. KETHEA supports the cooperation between agencies that work with drug dependant people in the Balkan countries in the field of research as well as the implementation of new methods of treatment. As far as the training programs are concerned the EU supports initiatives of exchange of professionals and visits to exchange experiences. The countries in the region do not make sufficient use of these opportunities, although the cooperation on prevention could help improve the services of the agencies and may be developed in the future into a research and training center.

Mrs. Terzidou, Director of the Greek Reitox Focal point of the EMCDDA, stated that the Greek Reitox Focal point has participated in the process of the EU enlargement with countries of the Balkan region (the Phare programs) together with the EMCDDA. The Greek focal point participated in the evaluation visits in Romania, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Turkey and developed bilateral relationships. It has supported the National Focal points in Romania and Bulgaria. Two 'twining' projects have been realized one in Cyprus that has been completed in 2004 and the other in Turkey that started in 2004 and will be completed in August 2006. Mrs. Terzidou pointed out that the cooperation with the countries of the region must not be limited to transfer of know how, but must aim at the exchange of information and experiences so that we can learn from each other. The Greek Focal point supports the proposal of the EMCDDA to organize a regional conference to evaluate the 'twining' projects.

Mr. Giannakis, President of the Organization against Drugs (OKANA), said that in the process of accession of Balkans Countries into the European Union it is necessary that a harmonization of the drug policies takes place in conformity with the EU strategy on Drugs. To face the drug problem in wider regions effectively a common policy is needed. In this framework

OKANA is supporting the cooperation with similar organizations in Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYROM, Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia Herzegovina, Turkey and other countries in the region. OKANA has discussed in the past the issue of a broader cooperation in the Balkan region and had developed plans for the establishment of a Center in Thessaloniki which would promote regional cooperation for drug policy. Mr. Giannakis announced that taking the occasion of this conference he will propose to the board of OKANA to implement this idea. OKANA has the possibilities to accommodate this center. A building is available and the necessary staff which has been foreseen for the city of Thessaloniki could cover the needs of this Inter-Balkan Coordination Center. Mr. Giannakis expressed the hope that OKANA will soon announce the decisions of its board on the issue.

The representative of Croatia, Mrs. Sanja Mikulic, referred to the recent developments in Croatia. The Croatian government adopted the new strategy and the action plan on drugs 2006-2009. Croatia strongly supports regional and international cooperation. In the past, at two meetings in Zagreb, an informal coordination mechanism was established with participation of all the countries of The Western Balkans. A proposal for a program of action has been discussed in the EU horizontal group on Drugs, but it has not been implemented. Croatia is of the opinion that the European Commission must support this initiative and make it possible by funding its activities.

Mr. Tulevski, representative of FYROM stated that his country is facing a problem as far as data collection is concerned. In FYROM it is necessary to define a drug strategy and pay special attention to programs with minority groups. The situation in prisons is disturbing, as well as the spread of HIV/AIDS. Cocaine and ATS are a new challenge. There is a need to evaluate the methods of treatment of drug addiction and to examine their effectiveness. Mr. Tulevski stated that FYROM had taken over the presidency of the Informal Coordination Group (ICG), after the Zagreb meetings, but for budgetary reasons no action could be undertaken. Mr. Tulevski said that the European Commission must examine the possibilities for support. At the margins of the conference a meeting was held between the representative of the European Commission and representatives of the Balkan region and it was agreed that a conference will be organized in autumn 2006.

In his intervention, Mr. Kiltidis, Member of the Greek Parliament and President of the bi-partisan Committee on Drug Policy of the Greek

Parliament, pointed out that cooperation in the Balkan countries can be successful only if the partners trust each other. Otherwise, there will be no cooperation. A basic presumption for successful cooperation is, therefore, the political will and the will to achieve consensus. Even the EU has not reached the cooperation needed. The law enforcement authorities are not under control of European mechanisms. Mr. Kiltidis supports the idea of a common European policy with European control mechanisms on issues like money laundering and cross-border control. In the end, what is really needed, for effective law enforcement policies, said Mr. Kiltidis, is an effective prevention and treatment policy. An integrated prevention and treatment policy which will be supported with the necessary budgetary means, can lead us to a solution of the demand of drugs. We do not need flexibility in the laws against drugs, because that suggests a pathetic attitude of compromising to lead a life with drugs. We need, on the contrary, to build up an integral prevention and treatment program which will result to a reduction of costs for law enforcement measures.

The representative of Italy, Mr. Mastrogregori referred to the cooperation of his country with the countries in the Balkans. He stressed the fact that Italy was present at the conferences in Dubrovnik and Zagreb and that Italy has a number of bilateral projects with several countries in the region in the framework of Phare, Meda and the Cards program. Mr. Mastrogregori expressed his support for the capacity building projects that are necessary as a first step for building up a drug strategy. He asked the speakers to clarify what is meant with the model of police cooperation and the way the Reitox focal points will be supported. Important issues for future activities are for Italy the trafficking of precursor chemicals and the situation of drug addicts in prisons. For the drug addicts in prisons, Italy has experience that it would be pleased to share with interested countries in the region.

The representative of the Customs Directorate, Mrs. Matsouka, pointed out that the issue of precursor chemicals is different from the drug issue. This means that the information needed for the law enforcement against precursors is different from that against drugs. The precursor chemicals are legally traded. Only 1% of this legal trade is diverted for the production of drugs. It is not easy to localize this 1% diverted chemicals. Further more, with the modern technological advancements and the use of internet it is rather easy to produce drugs.

The customs authorities have signed a memorandum of understanding with the chemical industry in order to control diversion of precursor chemicals. And as known: “no chemicals, no drugs.” The chemical industry has at its disposal useful knowledge needed to combat diversion of precursors. In the Balkan region, in cooperation with SECI, a group has been formed for the security of containers. The group is called “secure ark” and has a wide scope, not limited to precursor chemicals, and deals with all forms of organized trafficking of goods (trafficking of cigarettes, nuclear or radioactive substances etc.) On 29 and 30 of June, 2006 a training meeting on the security of containers will be organized in Athens.

The customs authority is aware of the problems it is facing and is implementing a reorganization plan of its services in all big custom locations (Units of Adulterated Products and law Enforcement).

Mrs. Zorbala, representative of the Department of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that the program “Hellenic Aid” supports projects that are related to organized crime. A special project against trafficking of human beings is supported by “Hellenic Aid.” The department of international cooperation supports initiatives of regional cooperation and finances projects of NGO’s. New initiatives in the field of drugs can be supported if applications will be submitted. In the field of drugs priority is given to projects of cooperation between public persecutors and the fight against HIV/Aids.

Mr. Bourhas, Head of the Narcotic Division of the Ministry of Public Order, stated that the Greek police has a broad network of liaison officers and the cooperation with the neighboring countries is developed quite well. There are, of course, possibilities for improvement. Mr. Bourhas pointed out that the rapid exchange and use of information is one of the most important factors in international cooperation to combat organized crime. The complexity, however, of the cases makes the implementation difficult. He referred to an example that shows the difficulties to work on a case of a criminal: A trafficker of drugs is arrested in Bucharest, the dealer he is working with is in Athens, the trafficker has a relationship with a woman in Albania and he is accused for money laundering in Serbia. It is also pointed out that the use of information is difficult because of the lack of a data base by SECI. The consequence is that the information cannot be processed. It is a gap that has to be solved as soon as possible.

Mr. Agalliu, representative of Albania said that his country gives priority to combat trafficking of drugs. The production of cannabis in Albania has been reduced significantly. The legislation process is adapted more or less to the European standards. A National Coordination Committee on drugs has been established and cooperation with the neighboring countries has been agreed in bilateral agreements. Liaison officers for the exchange of information are situated in different countries. Mr. Agalliu made special reference to the collaboration with Italy and Greece. With Italy there have been several common operations and the same is in development with Greece.

Mr. Pavel Abraham, representative of Romania informed the meeting about the activities of the Anti-drug agency in Romania. Since the establishment of the National Anti-drug Agency of the Romanian Ministry of Administration and Interior in 2002, things have been improved. In 2005 there has been an evaluation of the activities like the advice of the ministries of employment and social protection, public order and the ministry of interior, the set up of a system of services for drug addicts and the coordination of all governmental agencies that are responsible for drug policy. The collaboration on police and customs issues, as well as education and training is taking place in close cooperation with the University of Iasi and the police Academy. For 2006 a program for prevention, treatment and law enforcement has been agreed. The latest publication is the report on evaluation of data and the activities in 2005.

In a short intervention the representative of Bulgaria, Mr. Staniflav Bezovski, referred to the developments in his country and underlined the need for cooperation to which also other speakers had referred to. Mr. Balázs Molnár, representative of Hungary, referred to a joint project of the Hungarian agency on drugs and the one in FYROM. Mrs. Emira Fisekovic, representative of Bosnia Herzegovina, stated that she is attending the conference as an observer.

Mr. K. Ballas, National Coordinator for Drug Policy, conveyed to the meeting that the minister of Health, Mr. Avramopoulos, is a strong supporter of regional and international cooperation. Mr. Ballas announced that at the moment there is in development an initiative for the establishment of a Regional Center on Drugs and Organized Crime in Thessaloniki. Since this idea is still under discussion the UNODC has been asked to place this initiative under its auspices. Cooperation will be asked, of course, from the European Commission and the EMCDDA. Mr. Ballas has had a good

discussion about this with Mr. Costa, Director of UNODC. Mr. Costa may visit Athens in the coming period if there would be agreement on this initiative. The Minister of Health, Mr. Avramopoulos, is in favor of such an initiative and there are indications that there will be a positive result.

At the closing round of the discussion the speakers answered the questions of the participants and pointed out, according to their opinion, the important issues which have been raised at the discussion and need further consideration.

The moderator of the meeting thanked the participants for their contribution at the discussions, the information they delivered and the suggestions they made for cooperation and concrete actions to be undertaken in the Balkan region. He also thanked the staff of the Andreas Papandreou Foundation for the excellent organization of the meeting and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece for the active participation at the proceedings and its willingness to place this meeting under its aegis.

Conclusions/Recommendations

1.

In order to tackle the problem of organized crime and illicit drug trafficking several cooperation initiatives between the countries and the specialized agencies in the Balkan region have been developed. However, serious gaps exist in the field of coordination. The fragmentation of existing actions constitutes a serious problem which has to be faced with measures that will guarantee continuity and permanent evaluation of programs and actions. For this purpose it has been proposed to strengthen the Informal Coordination (ICG) established in the meetings organized by Croatia in 2003-2004. The countries in the Balkan region, the European Commission and the UNODC are asked to support this coordination mechanism on Drugs. It is necessary that the political leadership of the countries in the region commit themselves to include the drugs issue in their priorities. The summit of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEEC) which will be held at the end of the Greek Presidency in May-June 2006 will have to consider the possibilities for such a commitment.

2.

It has been underlined that the balanced approach between demand and supply reduction of drugs must be maintained as a basic principle for the

development of programs and concrete actions. The use of drugs in the Balkan countries, the serious health consequences for the users and the social problems that drug dependence is causing must get the same attention as law enforcement. Some participants were of the opinion that in essence if we want to be effective in the field of law enforcement we have to be effective in treatment and demand reduction. An integrated demand reduction program for which the leaders of the European countries sincerely and consistently will provide the necessary budgetary means may lead to a considerable reduction of the demand of drugs. An integrated treatment program will also result in a serious reduction of costs for law enforcement. The organizations for prevention and treatment must be supported and enlarged. The exchange of experiences between public and non governmental agencies must be enhanced through improvement of methods for effective prevention and treatment, seminars, exchange of workers and visits of treatment units and harm reduction projects.

3.

The cross border police-cooperation must be enhanced on the operational level. The fact that the SECI center in Bucharest does not have a data base makes the effective exchange of information difficult. A solution must be found for this issue. A future agreement between SECI and Europol, as it has been suggested at the conference, must be materialized in the near future.

4.

The initiative for an agreement on police cooperation according to the model of the Schengen agreement, which is going to be subject of discussion at the Ministerial Conference in Vienna (4 and 5 May 2006) is considered to be an important step for the improvement of police cooperation in the Balkan region.

5.

The diversion of chemical precursors for the production of heroin in Afghanistan is a challenge for the countries of the EU. The fact that the available intelligence, about the ways precursors find their destination into Afghanistan, is rather poor, is an indication that there is no adequate attention to this issue and that the approach of the production of heroin in Afghanistan is one-sided. At the conference it has been stressed that the production of heroin in Afghanistan is a shared responsibility of Afghanistan and the countries providing the precursor chemicals. Since a considerable part of the diversion of precursors is taking place in the countries of the

Balkan region, these countries have additional responsibility to face the problem. The EU must seriously examine its policy on this issue and focus more precisely on combating the diversion of precursors to Afghanistan. Support of the initiatives of the customs authorities cooperating with SECI to combat diversion of precursors is indispensable.

6.

The conference participants noted with interest the plan of the UNODC to undertake an analytical study on “Crime and Stability in the Balkans and affected Countries.” The combination of this analytical study with the elaboration of an action plan for the region makes the study highly important.

7.

The future cooperation between the EMCDDA and the Balkan countries will contribute to building up structures for monitoring and data collection on illicit drugs in the region. This cooperation can be effective only if there is a strong political and financial support from the Balkan countries for the establishment of their National Focal Points. Sharing the lessons learned from experiences of ‘twining’ initiatives between the Member States, the former and the current candidate countries, as well as the probable publication of a handbook with information and guidelines for setting up monitoring centers are positive activities that contribute to the improvement of the services for monitoring and data collection.

8.

The situation of drug dependant persons in prisons in the Balkan countries is a problem that has to be faced adequately. A large number of persons are in prison due to violations of the illicit drugs legislation. This is a problem for the penitentiary system. Strategies and programs for rehabilitation and social reintegration of these persons must be improved.

9.

The proposal of the Greek Ministry of Health and the Organization against Drugs (OKANA) to establish a Regional Center against Drugs and Organized Crime in Thessaloniki, Greece, deserves support of the European Commission and the EMCDDA as well as from the UNODC. The cooperation of the Balkan countries with this Center will strengthen the efforts for a common policy in combating effectively the problem of drugs in the region.

10.

The “Paris Pact” initiative must continue to include the Balkan Countries in its future activities. The forthcoming Conference of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Moscow (June 2006) must pay due attention to the situation in the Balkan countries since they are the main area of routes of heroin trafficking towards the central and Northern European countries.

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