

**Yalçın ÇAKICI**  
**Director of SECI CENTER**

**Honourable Chairman,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative Regional Center for Combating Trans-border Crime, I would like to thank you for your participation in the Second Annual Meeting of the SECI Center Member States Chiefs of Police and Customs Administrations.

I would like to thank also, the representatives of Interpol and Europol with which we have good relations in combating trans-border crime.

During the last decade, a lot of changes took place all over Europe. New partnerships were developed by the European Union and NATO, as a first step in the accession process of new members.

The issues of rule of law and human rights have become generally applicable and the development of democratic constitutional states has started. Thus, positive processes have been initiated by the countries in the region.

But at the same time, we should also talk about the dark side of the medal. In compliance with human rights, Southeast European countries had to open their borders. These countries are characterized by deep reform processes, their law enforcement authorities have limited resources and are working within a new legal and judicial framework. All of these facts facilitated the establishment of criminal networks inter-connected at international level. On the other hand, there is clear evidence on the relation between organized crime and terrorism because they share the same field of action and environment for their activities.

The international cooperation of law enforcement authorities could not keep pace with the international cooperation of criminals, who are always one step ahead of the law enforcement agencies. As a result of the cooperation between the states, much information is created, but it does not reach where and when it is needed. The information and the accumulated knowledge are dispersed among the member states of the EU and NATO and the countries of Southeast Europe.

Understanding the objectives of various organized crime groups and the correlation between these groups and their methods of operation, such as transportation routes throughout Eastern Europe and final destinations throughout Western Europe, world leaders and global policy makers started to pay appropriate attention to this specific Region, by implementing a mutual approach and cooperation philosophy.

Governments from Southeast Europe have recognised the threat of organized crime and on May 26, 1999, exactly four years ago, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, and Turkey signed the **"SECI Agreement on Cooperation To Prevent and Combat Trans-border Crime"**. This is the legal framework for cooperation between and among police and customs authorities of the region and for the establishment, in November 2000, of the SECI Regional Center in Bucharest, Romania. Croatia and Slovenia signed the Agreement in 2000. At the same time recently, Serbia and Montenegro also joined our family, becoming the 12<sup>th</sup> member state, but the ratification of the Agreement by their Parliament is still in progress.

That's why we, as member countries, convened here to commemorate and celebrate the fourth anniversary of this historical event for the Region in combating trans-border organized crimes.

Since organized crime directly affects the entire world, apart from the member states, there are a lot of other countries which are willing to cooperate with the SECI Center, in order to exchange information and share their experiences with us. Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Canada,

France, Germany, Georgia, Italy, Spain, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States of America have the status of **Permanent Observers** to the SECI Center and their experts participate in the task force activities, being involved in the different regional law enforcement operations, in accordance with their national interest.

The overall goal of the SECI Regional Center is to support the member states in their efforts to improve democracy, rule of law in Southeast Europe, and make it more attractive for investments, with the declared aim of reaching economic and political stability in the region. The SECI Center is able to contribute to the creation of a safer environment for all Europe. In order to achieve that, first of all we need to improve regional cooperation in combating trans-border crime. This means an enhancement of the coordination efforts between law enforcement agencies within the individual participating states is also required. Furthermore, taking into account the global aspects of trans-border crime, cooperation with countries outside the region and representatives of international organizations is critical. In this respect, the SECI Center can be a catalyst for efficient working relationships in making such cooperation possible.

INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization (WCO) have been granted a **Permanent Advisor** status by the SECI Agreement and we have informal cooperation relations. We also have relations with the Europol, as a partner in combating organized crime, and representatives of Europol participate in our meetings and share their experiences.

The SECI Regional Center for Combating Transborder Crime has several main objectives, one of them being to support the field activities of the law enforcement officers, in terms of a "service provider".

We should not also forget the other advantages which the Center offers: the use of the SECI Center speeds up the exchange of information process, and makes all activities more economical, because instead of sending liaison officers to 12 states, the member countries have the opportunity to find in one place all the representatives of the participating states.

The simplified legal basis is yet another advantage offered by the Center, as the SECI Agreement ensures the necessary legal framework for law enforcement cooperation.

At the same time, the SECI Center represents a **Cooperation Common House**, since it is the ideal place for joint trainings and exchange of experience, being a facilitator with respect to the realistic evaluation of the organized crime phenomenon in the Southeast Europe.

The Center also aims to provide assistance to the member countries in order to harmonize their law enforcement legislation in respect to EU requirements, and to support national efforts in order to improve domestic cooperation between law enforcement agencies.

Last, but not least, a major advantage of the SECI Center is represented by its **flexible working methods**, which include the daily exchange of information, the specialized task forces and the working groups on operational issues.

One of the most important tasks of the SECI Center is to coordinate regional operations, multinational investigations and activities of several task forces.

With regard to the daily exchange of information, the operational activity is conducted in accordance with the regulations of the SECI Center, the Strategic Plan and the Annual Action Plan.

In 2001, approximately 3,000 pieces of information were exchanged and 900 requests for information were received by the SECI Center, while in 2002, there were more than 3,000 requests for information. Available criminal intelligence, based on the gathered information from the cases and operations conducted under the coordination of the SECI Center, indicates that 70 % of seized drugs and 90 % of discovered and stopped smuggled migrants had as destination Western Europe.

In accordance with our mission, we identified the priority fields to combat trans-border crime. Dedicated task forces were set up in each field of interest and have been constituted by field officers of the SECI Center member states. These task forces, which are modern tools of fighting against organized crime, are established and organized in compliance with the General Guidelines with the Task Forces, and their activities are developed on the basis of dedicated Annual Action

Plans, agreed to by the participating countries and organizations. There are six major Task Forces, as follows:

- Drug Trafficking, led by Bulgaria;
- Trafficking in Human Beings, led by Romania;
- Financial and Computer crime, led by FYR of Macedonia;
- Anti-Fraud, led by Albania and Croatia (the participating countries in this Task Force will meet in June to discuss various details, concerning its activity)
- Stolen vehicles, led by Hungary;
- Anti-Terrorism, led by Turkey, which includes three sub-projects:
  - ✓ Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, led by Albania;
  - ✓ Trafficking of Weapons of Mass Destruction, led by Romania;
  - ✓ Anti-Terrorism, led by Turkey.

Due to the discrepancies between the member states regarding the level of legislation concerning personal data protection, special attention was also paid to the development of an appropriate package of regulations on this issue, within the SECI Center. In this regard, the JCC approved in 2001 three basic documents on Personal Data Protection, which are fully in line with EU legislation, namely:

- General Standards and Procedures for the processing of Information,
- Rules on Data and Information Access Control and Deletion and
- Security Manual.

The SECI Regional Center is more and more recognized at international level as the only existing practical law enforcement cooperation initiative in Southeast Europe. Independent states and international organizations are interested in our activity and they are also seeking the opportunity to engage in the regional cooperation. This positive trend characterizes the enlargement of the cooperation network of the SECI Center.

Southeast Europe has been the theatre of painful wars, conflicts, hatred and historical rivalries. A few years ago, bringing all the countries in the region together and making them exchange information was a mere dream. This unbelievable dream turned into reality and the SECI Regional Center is now operational. I strongly believe that its capacity will be further developed and used more and more for combating organized crime, in a common effort and support with all our member countries and observer states together with the related international organizations.

Thank you for your attention.