

3rd Western Balkan Roadmap Coordination Meeting, 3 July 2020

Conclusions of the meeting

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It is a pleasure for me to be able to come at the ending of this Regional Seminar to say a few words in terms of conclusions.

First, I want to express appreciation to all of you who have spent despite difficult circumstances, almost the entire day remotely in providing us with a top-level update on different activities: To Western Balkan partners first and foremost, international organizations, agencies and regional organizations as well. Many member states were connected and off course our two patrons so to say Jean-Claude and Marcus who were very active. You see a kind of involvement of the EU that does not diminish their motivation and commitment. They continue to push the boat and sail with us further on this important aspect. Off course to Bojana from SEESAC for getting all of us together, organizing this and getting such a good result at the end.

Following the Ministerial in Berlin we had one small thing – a very strong demonstration of the political commitment on all sides. We have seen today that this frankly goes in all the promises that have been expressed in Berlin. This fight again, the difficulties with Covid situation, I haven't heard anybody complaining

about this. I heard some of you mentioning some difficulties, but all of you relating to the fact that these difficulties are overcome. If we are slightly delayed here and there, there is no massive disengagement or no massive consequences in terms of the overall implementation plan. We have seen that also on the budget side, again despite extremely challenging times for our public finances. We do have still some sort of comfortable layer to work on – on financial side trust fund and others. You heard my colleague Maciej at the beginning, at the opening today, underlining the fact that on the financial side we do remain very committed.

We continue to accompany the implementation of this extremely important Roadmap. Today for me at least, the two-hours that I followed, was not only about the approximation of law and new legislation. Here I think we had once more, a very frank demonstration on how close the legal frameworks are in all the pertinent fields to the ones existing in the EU. But I think the sense of discussion was very much about the implementation and the actual actions that have been taken. Many numbers have been cited, many concrete illustrations of different things that have been done in terms of protected sides, in terms of new registrations of firearms, in terms of public campaigns that also have been launched. All this show us that its not only about the law but its very much about all the different accompanying measures that were present in the Roadmap, that you are all actively pursuing. That for me is very important and strong takeaway.

On the action plan I think ultimately, we really do have (I heard various speakers and based also on the work of SEESAC) four priorities ongoing:

On the first one - **the control of illicit firearms** - here again I think that on the harmonization of the legislation everything has been done. I don't see major gaps frankly. We also note various moves in terms of advancement on ensuring safety and security of stockpiles. Again, something we have worked on in the past with the Head of the OSCE etc., in some parts of the Western Balkans. We see that these good recipes are now taking effect and being implemented. Also, the increased number of surplus and confiscated weapons destroyed- many figures have been cited today by many of you and this is very important. It means that beyond the overall framework now a lot of action is being conducted.

The second flagship priority – **better knowledge on the actual threat of firearms trafficking**, i.e. our common understanding of the way traffickers are playing, the type of firearms also that are being trafficked and handing of these by law enforcement community at large, then ultimately by the judiciary. Here as well we see that there is still an immense further goal for more cooperation, nationally between the different authorities (police, border guards, intelligence community, judiciary with prosecutors). I have seen quite a few prosecutors in the videos today, which is very important and strong side. So, there is a lot more in terms of completing the hole chain and making the chain working close together but also among our- selves, regionally and wider EU plus WB region.

Activities such as EMPACT - big thank you to our Spanish friends who continue to lead this, which is difficult because it is so wide in terms of scope etc. But we see the benefits through EMPACT and beyond EMPACT, because also of having cross

border cooperation, joint teams, joint initiatives, joint investigations that have been performing. This is an area where I think more and more focus will have to be put on. I've heard you messages on migration; I think it is very important. I've heard many of you, almost all of you pointing at the further threat, possible new threat as well, in this very tense context of migration within your jurisdiction but also at your borders. We will be looking into this. That is typically a type of the signal that will be taken very seriously, and we will see together with Europol and related agencies how we could actually put a little bit more of a prism on this.

On the third priority **the improved law enforcement cooperation**, here I heard a lot of good things about new focal points and that these focal points increasingly, within your own jurisdictions were recognized by the others. So, it is not only the focal point of the police or the border guard, but it was really a focal point for firearms at large. Progressively, those focal points manage also to get direct connection and direct action/involvement throughout the chain of different actors being represented, including prosecutors but also by mobilization of specialized forensics experts etc. So please let us continue supporting these contact points and make their life easier in terms of providing them with further bridges to work on. Based on your feedback we see good signal how to finalize establishment of those focal points, also stepping up work at the borders. Many of you still have pointed to the increased intake of border guards in this work and the awareness raising of all the different authorities about the importance and negative effects of possession of the firearms.

Finally on the forth priority - **international cooperation** - big thank you to all the organizations that have pointed at this to some of our trusted friends (Americans, Canadians, Japanese, others) and continue to show these efforts at the WB and at our door, I would say.

Also, and this was the direct intake of the European Commission at the Berlin Ministerial - the imminent adoption of the new EU action plan on firearms. This should be for us a testimony of the extraordinary work in the context of the WB action plan, in the sense that it is a privilege to feel where we can demonstrate how we can integrate the WB partners, all of them while marching towards the formal enlargement. We are very happy to have now two new WB countries which will be formally negotiating the accession, but beyond the formal accession progressively area by area trying to work together as one team and using the same tools, our agencies and so on. **The fact that we are integrating you in the EU action plan is a testimony of this level of integration but also and I think this is unique , first time it happens in a sector ,we are actually translating what you have done in Western Balkans and propose to apply it across the European Union.** We propose to apply the same priorities, we propose to apply the same KPIs to work exactly on the same winning way as you have done and conceptualized in the context of the WB. I think there is no better reward than to see this being translated to all member states. Something that we will follow closely by both the Foreign affairs and diplomats but also now more and more by the ministries of interior, ministries of justice and all the relevant actors.

I wanted to leave my concluding word with this because this is probably the best testimony for the fantastic, concrete elements of implementation that you have heard throughout this conference, but also on the systemic way that we are actually embracing and applying your action plan on ourselves. Thank you very much. It was a bit longer than expected but I think this deserved to be said.

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