Speech of Mr Peter Widermann, ICMPD Director General for the High-level Conference for the Project ‘EU Support to Law Enforcement in Bosnia and Herzegovina’

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 24 April 2014

Distinguished Ministers, Your Excellencies, Esteemed Representatives of States and International Organisations, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like to start by extending my sincere appreciation to the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina for hosting this meeting today and allowing me to speak again in front of such a distinguished audience.

When we were asked to join the consortium of this project some three years ago, we accepted enthusiastically. Firstly, because it touches upon our core mandate: to develop innovative, comprehensive and sustainable migration policies and to function as a service exchange mechanism for governments and organisations.

But secondly, also, because this project gave us the opportunity to provide four of our member states with practical support, technical assistance and advice: Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the beneficiary of this project, as well as Austria, Slovenia and Hungary, as consortium members.

I am especially pleased that ICMPD was given this opportunity for cooperation by Bosnia and Herzegovina, because this project is further proof of the close ties that we have developed over the past two decades, which go right back to the earliest days of ICMPD, when we could provide support to Bosnia and Herzegovina’s police reform efforts and facilitate the discussions which eventually led to the establishment of the state border guards at the end of the 1990s.

Since then our cooperation has expanded over too many projects and topics to mention them here individually; therefore, I would only like to say that I am very proud that Bosnia and Herzegovina is since 2011 one of our member states, and is for the first time chairing our Steering Group this year.

At the kick-off meeting 2 years ago, I mentioned that I considered this project an important stepping stone which would contribute to the efforts of the EU and its Member States to support Bosnia and Herzegovina in its pursuit of EU membership. I stated that with hard work and dedication, we would be building upon established partnerships to work towards a more secure Bosnia and Herzegovina within a more secure Europe.
Today, I am very pleased to note that **significant progress** has indeed been made in this respect within all 10 components of the project. To name just a few examples of this success, I would like to call attention to activities such as drafting Bosnia and Herzegovina’s first Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA) and support to the country’s efforts to establish a new Organised Crime Strategy. Equally important is the new Border Police Strategy and Action Plan, which was introduced in the framework of this project, as are the numerous activities realised to increase cooperation between police and prosecutors. All of the above are crucial elements to ensure the rule of law in a safe and just society.

These **positive results of this EU-funded project** must be ascribed in equal parts to the knowledge, skills and competences of the experts and staff involved, and the hard work and dedication of our national counterparts. Being able to draw on the experience and knowledge of 11 high-level experts from 4 EU member states, to be able to rely on the support of our local staff and, above all, receiving pro-active suggestions from the national partner agencies of this project, were the cornerstones of our joint success.

Over the past two years, together, we managed to create a constructive, amicable and effective **working environment, in which this project could thrive**. The various activities of the project were not just used to pass on knowledge and expertise, but the latter were shared, exchanged, reviewed and discussed, in order to best serve the actual situation and specific needs on the ground.

I would like to underline that I consider the close cooperation of all stakeholders on an individual as well as institutional level, (namely the project team, the EU Delegation and the national counterparts) to be one, if not the most crucial factor for making this project a success. This is an achievement we can all be proud of, and I hope that this example will be followed by other projects in the future.

Thank you very much for your attention!