

OHR's Statement at the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference in Banja Luka

PDHR Butler to Highlight Progress towards Greater Freedom of Movement for BiH Citizens in and beyond Region

PDHR Larry Butler will be speaking tomorrow at a conference in Sarajevo on Border Security in Southeast Europe. SDHR Peter Bas-Backer will attend the first day of the conference today. As you know, border security is a key policy priority not just in BiH but among its neighbours. Drug trafficking, people trafficking and weapons trafficking are undermining the efforts of governments in the region to tackle the scourge of organized crime - and none of these activities could flourish if border security were adequate. The issue is a basic and urgent requirement for further integration in Europe.

Ambassador Butler will highlight the fact that

- BiH has established the legal framework for its border supervision regime and the SBS in coordination with ITA and SIPA is applying this legal framework at the operational level.
- The SBS is fully functioning and has developed a computerised system for controlling entry and exit at border crossings;
- Currently, 14 border crossings are part of an integrated IT document management system. By the end of this year, all 53 international border crossing will have been connected to this system, which enables full communication among all border crossings and competent institutions.

Taken together, these measures are helping to ensure full coordination among all competent agencies working on or around borders in BiH, in line with best European practice.

Ambassador Butler will stress that these and other related measures are designed

to *expand* freedom, not restrict it. The object is to maintain a regional border security system that protects the interests of citizens. At its most basic this involves making sure that criminals cannot take advantage of porous borders, and at the same time making sure that citizens enjoy the maximum possible freedom of movement – among countries in the region and between the region and the wider world, including the European Union.