

# Remarks by Principal Deputy High Representative Raffi Gregorian On the Occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Founding of the BiH Border Police



## Border Police a BiH Success Story

Excellencies, Director Dumancic, Police Directors, Members of the Border Police, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the BiH Border Police. It is also the second anniversary of the start of negotiations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union to eliminate the visa requirement for BiH citizens travelling to the EU.

The work of the Border Police has been crucial to those successful negotiations and so it gives me special satisfaction today to commend the men and women of this agency for the service they have given, and continue to give, to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Every day of the year they make an indispensable contribution with regard to BiH's EU

aspirations, an indispensable contribution to the security and convenience of BiH travellers, and an indispensable contribution to the development of Bosnia and Herzegovina's international trade. In so many ways the State Border Police is on the front line of BiH's future.

While news of the European Commission's recommendation on visa liberalization is gratifying, now comes the hard part of maintaining the necessary EU standards to make visa liberalization a reality. The Border Police must continue to receive the financial, logistical and institutional support that it needs. The recent opening of new field offices in Trebinje and Bijeljina is an encouraging sign that the Border Police is establishing appropriate modern facilities in the field. But it is hard for the Border Police to fulfill all its tasks when some political leaders question the legitimacy of state institutions and seek to cut funding to already under-manned and under-resourced state institutions by more than 20% so they can raise spending in the entities.

Let me cut through all the disinformation on this matter: Article III of the BiH Constitution makes the state responsible for international law enforcement and international communications, which includes things like border crossings. The State having made a commitment to border protection more than a decade ago, the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH years ago adopted the High Representative's decision on Border Police and has since amended the law several times in order to increase the effectiveness of the Border Police. Nevertheless, the Border Police remain understaffed, and as I have learned from my own visits to border facilities, shortages of certain types of equipment like night vision devices, sensors, and so on remain.

Resources are vital, of course, but the Border Police cannot do its job without good working relationships with counterpart agencies in neighbouring countries. In this regard it is gratifying to see that cross-border cooperation with Serbia,

Croatia and Montenegro has been established and enhanced at all relevant levels and with solid results to show for it: improved interception, reduced cross-border crime, and greater ease of travel .

I commend Director Dumancic and his team for their leadership and skilful management in guiding the Border Police and in imbuing the force with stability and professionalism. I applaud their achievements and encourage them to continue to deliver results as the Director begins his second four-year mandate.

As we mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Border Police we see a countrywide, multiethnic agency deploying state-of-the-art equipment to carry out complex and demanding tasks in a professional manner and constantly seeking to improve its effectiveness. It is a practical example of how the state can – and should – serve its citizens. As I said at the beginning: in so many ways the State Border Police is on the front line of BiH's future, and we all have a stake in its—in YOUR—success. Congratulations, my personal thanks to the men and women of the Border Police, but also to their families whose sacrifice and support to their loved ones helps make it all possible.

Thank you