Press release

OSCE seminar on cross border trade and transport in South-Eastern Europe identifies measures to improve customs and border proceedings

BELGRADE, 15 December 2006 - Border, customs, trade and transport officials as well as private sector representatives from South-Eastern Europe identified measures that would harmonize customs and border procedures during a two-day seminar that ended in Belgrade today.


"Improving the flow of goods across borders requires modern procedures and standards in a legal framework," said Vesna Arsic, State Secretary of the Serbian Finance Ministry. Participants tackled existing challenges related to cross border movement of goods and exchanged information on best practices. They agreed that harmonizing and reducing the number of and duration of border controls would enhance the regional trade potential. The event also addressed ways to combat corruption at border crossings.

"I believe that the large attendance by high level participants from all over South-Eastern Europe proves that we are on the right track, that indeed the OSCE has a role to play in promoting integrated border management, harmonized legislation and transport policies and in improving cross-border cooperation in its region," said Ambassador Frank Geerkens, Head of the Belgian Foreign Ministry's OSCE Chairmanship Unit.

He also noted that a decision adopted at the OSCE Ministerial Council, held last week in Brussels, said the Organization should continue to promote dialogue in the field of transport and confirmed its role in providing political support for the implementation of transport-related conventions.

Participants visited three border-crossing points on the border between Serbia and Croatia. The Belgrade seminar was a follow-up to the 14th OSCE Economic Forum, held earlier this year in Vienna and Prague. The forum's theme was secure transport networks. The seminar also was part of a joint OSCE/UNECE pilot project on promoting UNECE key legal instruments related to trade and transport. A similar event, targeting the Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asian region took place in October in Moscow.