

SEMINAR FOR WESTERN BALKANS COUNTRIES
(Sofia, 21-23 May 2006)

Opening address by Mr. Gyorgy Balogh, senior adviser of the MFA,
Hungary

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here and welcoming you. I thank our Bulgarian colleagues for giving me a chance to address this seminar and share with you some of my comments right at the beginning.

Two years ago, when Bulgaria and Hungary initiated a regional approach within the framework of the Australia Group to the problems of WMD non-proliferation, we have targeted the states of the Western Balkans: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Why them, why you?

- 1.) Because the regional approach in addressing the problems of WMD non-proliferation is of particular importance for the strengthening of the global security system
- 2.) Because the strategic location of the Balkan states as a bridge between the countries of Western Europe and the states of the Middle East, Africa, and Asia is crucial in this respect. The role of the Balkan states, as a factor deterring Chemical and Biological Weapons proliferation, could not be emphasised enough.
- 3.) Because the stability- and security-building measures in the Balkans make it possible to overcome and change the negative image of the region that it project crises and conflicts. Accomplishing the Joint Action Plan for the Western Balkans we can contribute to a new image, namely that the Balkan states strictly follow the principles aimed at EU and NATO accession, upholding fine prospects for the pursuit of regional co-operation in the sphere of export control, among others.

Within the framework of the Bulgarian-Hungarian Regional Action Plan for the Western Balkan Countries two seminars were organized during the year 2005: one in Budapest and one in Sofia. The aim of these two seminars was to facilitate the establishment and the improvement, as applicable, of the legal, institutional and human foundations of the national export control systems functioning in the countries of the Western Balkans. Such national systems are designed to enable these countries to exercise the export controls necessary to meet their obligations under the relevant international treaties and export control regimes.

Another purpose of the joint outreach programme of Hungary and Bulgaria has been to assist the on-going activities of the governments in the Western Balkans in strengthening the capabilities of their respective border customs agencies. ***Proper border controls based on solid legal foundations in this region would be the best response to the concerns that dual-use goods and technologies, toxic chemicals or bio-toxins could be used for production of WMD or terrorist purposes.***

I am convinced that the seminar will continue the process launched two years ago and will deplore new areas within the joint outreach programme of Bulgaria and Hungary. Let me commend the excellent preparatory work performed by Mr. Dejanov and his staff, as well as the rich program of the next two days. And, besides this, I wish to our colleagues coming from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to have a good work. I also wish you to use this occasion to deepen the regional co-operation in the field of non-proliferation of sensitive chemical and biological goods and technologies.

May I have one more additional announcement: as in the last year, there will also be a second seminar in late September this year in Budapest. As you can recall, the work in Budapest last year focused on the legislative and administrative aspects of export control. This year we try to go along this track and discuss how to realize, how to practice export control in the framework of e-govern@ment. I would like to invite you all to this seminar. The technical details will be communicated in a few weeks time.

Once again: I wish you much success in working here, and in using the experiences at home.