UNODC in South Eastern Europe

NEWSLETTER | Vol. 33

This newsletter provides information about key news and events related to UNODC’s action and partnerships in the region. The UNODC Regional Programme for South Eastern Europe (2020-2023) is structured along the three main pillars: (I) Support to law enforcement, enhanced border security and related topics, (II) Strengthening the fight against organized crime and countering illicit financial flows, (III) Drug use prevention and treatment of drug use disorders, and a cross-cutting pillar (IV) on research and emerging types of crime. The Programme focuses on priority actions identified in cooperation with the Governments in the region and through a dialogue with national, regional and international partners. For feedback, queries or comments regarding this newsletter, please contact Ms. Ekaterina Kolykhalova (e-mail: ekaterina.kolykhalova@un.org) and Ms. Lejla Karahasanovic (lejla.karahasanovic@un.org).

NEWS AND EVENTS

UNODC supports the Berlin Process in addressing some of the key challenges in South Eastern Europe

28-29 January 2020, Sofia, Bulgaria: UNODC participated in the 3rd Berlin Process Security Commitments Steering Group meeting addressing key security threats in the Western Balkans. International and regional stakeholders, including Austria, France, Germany and the UK (chairing the event) as well as the Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe (PCC SEE) Secretariat, the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC), the Regional Anti-Corruption initiative (RAI) and UNODC were present at the event to share views and be part of productive discussions on law enforcement information exchange and addressing the regional security threats. The meeting is part of this year’s chairmanship of the Berlin process by Bulgaria and North Macedonia, latter being the first Western Balkan country in this function. The delegates discussed the current situation in the areas of illicit finance and anti-corruption, firearms trafficking, irregular migration, modern slavery and human trafficking as well as ways to address them. UNODC is a strong supporter and an implementing partner of the Berlin Process, in particular through its Regional Programme for South Eastern Europe (RP SEE).

As a follow up to the aforementioned Steering Group meeting, on 20 February 2020 in Vienna, Austria, UNODC, the UK, Germany, Italy and RAI met to discuss the future cooperation. The main objective of the consultation was to provide a step-by-step overview of the process aimed at strengthening anti-corruption and related areas in the region and agree on the objectives and principles that will be guiding the process as well as the immediate next steps. The UNODC RP SEE and RAI will ensure the national ownership of the work to be done by the national authorities from the region, along with an integrative approach, an increased synergy of efforts and stronger impact.

UNODC participates in the DG NEAR consultations on 2020 Enlargement package

5 February 2020, Brussels, Belgium: UNODC joined consultations of the Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) on the 2020 Enlargement package, which sets out the way forward and takes stock of the situation in the candidate countries and potential candidates. The package is in line with the new EU methodology for enlargement released on the same date, which provides for more resources and more scrutiny of the EU accession processes in the Western Balkan. UNODC, including its RP SEE, remains one of the active actors in the Western Balkans as it supports the Governments of the region in their efforts towards the fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria, particularly in the areas of Chapters 23, 24 and 28 of the EU acquis.

UNODC takes part in the IPA 2017 Counter Criminality Awards Conference on stability and cooperation in the Western Balkans

31 January 2020, Naples, Italy: UNODC participated in the Counter Criminality Awards Conference organized in the framework of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) 2017 project on
Countering Serious Crime in the Western Balkans. The event was organized by the lead partners of the project - the Ministry of Interior of Italy, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the Centre for International Legal Cooperation (CILC). The event provided a platform for a high-level discussion on the Western Balkans as an area of stability for European security, policy, new challenges and police cooperation. Among the 400 stakeholders present, Ministers and Police from the wider region and other senior law enforcement officials joined the discussion along with the representatives of international and regional organizations. The latter included the Secretary General of INTERPOL, the Executive Director of EUROPOL, the Head of the PCC SEE Secretariat, the Director of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC), representatives of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX), the OSCE, the EC DG NEAR, and the UNODC RP SEE. The UNODC delegate presented the key principles of the Office's work in the region, namely ownership and partnerships; policy and strategy; and impact and results. The event also provided an opportunity to present the RP SEE - the framework of the UNODC work in the region, where the above principles are applied, and the main tools that UNODC uses to support the Governments of the Western Balkans in their efforts towards increased stability and security.

UNODC further strengthens preparedness for cooperation with the EU

23-24 January 2020, Belgrade, Serbia: The UNODC Brussels’s Liaison Office delivered a seminar "How to build and sustain a successful partnership with the EU". The audience included primarily HQ and field staff of the UNODC RP SEE and was aimed to ensure the best implementation of the EU contribution agreement in the region. The training focused on the latest political and policy developments, background to the EU-UN partnership, the evolution of the framework agreement, cooperation and policy priorities, the EU role on the international scene, the dialogue with the EU Delegations, the Instrument for Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) and other topics. (For info on all above: Ekaterina Kolykhalova)

ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING, FINANCING OF TERRORISM AND ASSET FORFEITURE

UNODC completed a large-scale action to support South Eastern Europe in the field of financial investigations

The UNODC project on Financial Investigations (FI) in SEE, funded by the European Commission, was delivering activities to build regional anti-money laundering and counter-financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) capacity. This joint two-year UNODC/CEPOL project was designed to strengthen the capacities of the law enforcement sector and the judiciary in the six Western Balkan jurisdictions to effectively detect, investigate, prosecute and recover the proceeds of crime. The project has come to its close at the end of March 2020 with the last activities described below.

UNODC takes this opportunity to thank all its counterparts within this action for cooperation and looks forward to more joint work in this subject area in the future.

11-14 February, Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina; 25-28 February, Tirana, Albania; 25-28 February 2020, Pristina, Kosovo under UNSCR 1244: UNODC, in cooperation with the national and local authorities, completed three UNODC mentored quality assurance trainings forming the 6th phase of the Train-the-Trainer (ToT) programme on FI. The purpose of this programme was to provide the authorities of the addressed jurisdictions with a unified approach in conducting FI at the outset of all investigations linked to serious and organized crime, drug trafficking, money laundering and terrorist financing matters as well as to reinforce the regional and cross-border cooperation amongst the law enforcement and judiciary institutions of the Western Balkan region. During the implementation of the project, UNODC certified ten trainers in each Western Balkan jurisdiction, who developed, with UNODC support, six national curricula on FI tailored to their contexts and legal frameworks and based on the practical case-studies from the national law enforcement and judiciary institutions. Furthermore, UNODC organized five meetings of the project’s focal points from the six jurisdictions to review the project’s achievements and the way forward in addition to four series of FI trainings conducted during the programme, which received positive feedback from the participants and assessed as relevant to all institutions contributing to the advancement of the rule of law in the supported jurisdictions. (For info: Oleksiy Feshchenko)

ORGANIZED CRIME AND TERRORISM PREVENTION

UNODC remains active in the regional efforts on small arms and light weapons

4 March 2020, Belgrade, Serbia: UNODC attended the Regional Steering Group meeting on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), which provided an opportunity for all actors in the field of firearms control in South Eastern Europe to provide updates on their projects and plans for activities in 2020. The meeting was attended by 63 participants, including representatives from the Western Balkan jurisdictions, UNDP regional and country offices, OSCE Missions, EMPACT Firearms (the European Union 4-year policy cycle to fight serious and organized crime), the EU Delegation, and other bilateral counterparts, as well as the UNODC Global Firearms Programme.
UNODC focused its intervention on the criminal justice response to countering firearms trafficking and informed the audience about the office's on-going activities in the region, including the support for the harmonization of criminal laws with the UN Firearms Protocol, capacity building for criminal justice practitioners, support for joint investigation teams and data collection among others. UNODC also provided an overview of planned activities under the Multi-Donor Trust Fund in support of the Roadmap for a sustainable Solution to the Illegal Possession, Misuse and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons and their Ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024. Following the regional meeting, on 5 March UNODC held co-ordination meetings with the representatives of Customs, the Prosecutor’s Office and Ministry of Trade, Telecommunications and Tourism to brief them on UNODC activities for 2020. (For info: Diman Dimov)

UNODC supports the Albanian State Police

28 February 2020, Tirana, Albania: As part of the cooperation between UNODC and the Government of Albania in the framework of the RP SEE, UNODC donated evidence containers to the Albanian State Police. The donation of this equipment further strengthens the capacities of the Albanian law enforcement to address drug trafficking and other forms of organized crime and carry out the related investigations and proceedings. This delivery forms a part of the overall donation of equipment by UNODC to the Albanian law enforcement authorities and is expected to enhance their performance and further strengthen the partnership between UNODC and the Government of Albania. (For info: Ekaterina Kolykhalova)

UNODC supports global efforts in addressing foreign terrorist fighters

12 February 2020, Vienna, Austria: On the occasion of the Joint Regional High-Level Conference on "Foreign Terrorist Fighters - Addressing Current Challenges" convened by the OSCE, the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and Switzerland in cooperation with the 2020 Albanian OSCE Chairmanship, UNODC organized a side event on Training Guides on the investigation and prosecution of FTFs through sharing of electronic evidence. The event aimed at promoting sustainable capacity building and the use of UNODC training tools, including the recently updated UNODC Manual on FTFs for the Judicial Training Institutes in South Eastern Europe translated into the local languages of the region. Some 30 participants of the event discussed enhancing international cooperation in sharing electronic evidence, use of information sharing mechanisms and training tools and sustainable capacity building to investigate and prosecute FTFs cases. The heads of SEE judicial and prosecutorial training institutions presented their training programmes, particularly the ones currently using the UNODC tools. This event contributes to the UNODC efforts in addressing the FTF phenomenon in SEE and beyond. (For info: Dolgor Solongo)

UNODC continues to support the expansion of drug use prevention interventions in Croatia

3 March, Osijek; 10 March, Zadar; 11 March 2020, Split, Croatia: UNODC together with the Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF) expanded the reach of the Lions Quest Skills for Adolescence (LQSFA) programme to Croatia thus availing the programme to five SEE countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia). This intervention is a school-based programme delivered by teachers and aimed at improving the social and life skills of students in order to prevent a variety of risk factors related to drug use. To date, the programme reached 41 elementary schools across Croatia, with the involvement of 90 teachers, reaching over 2,500 students, for the envisaged period of two academic years. As a part of the monitoring process, the first follow-up sessions were held in three cities in Croatia – Osijek, Zadar and Split – gathering more than 40 teachers, who had an opportunity to highlight the positive aspects of the programme and discuss the face challenges to mitigate them and support effective implementation. Additionally, the pre-test results collected at the beginning of the pilot training in Croatia were presented to the group covering topics such as knowledge, attitudes and students’ behaviour towards substance use, identifying the baseline data for further tracking and comparative analysis.

UNODC and LCIF promote drug demand reduction through school-based prevention strategies

4 March 2020, Vienna, Austria: UNODC and LCIF jointly organized a side-event on “School-based prevention strategies that work: the global UNODC-LCIF partnership” in the margins of the 63rd session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. The event served as a platform for promoting the effective drug demand reduction initiative through the prism of the LQSFA programme implemented since 2014 in Central America, West Africa and SEE as a result of collaboration between UNODC and LCIF. During the event, the LCIF coordinator provided a thorough overview of the programme achievements to date and the way forward. Moreover, a local LQSFA trainer from the Education and Teacher Training Agency, which is piloting the programme in Croatia, took part in the event to share her experience with the programme and explain how it is beneficial to the participants and the national education system. The teacher emphasized the importance of using drug use prevention evidence-based strategies and the added value of the LQSFA programme, which is used globally and is built on international recognition. She described the LQSFA programme to be “designed to respond to the changing world of children and their families by helping to create the meaningful experiences, opportunities and relationships children need in order to become caring, capable and contributing members of society”. Furthermore, the teacher pointed out the benefits of the LQSFA programme on youth as it addresses basic life skills, character development, prevention of behavior disorders and relationship-centered learning in the classroom and school, and concluded with an overview of the current and future implementation of the programme in Croatia.
Policy level side event “Prevention without borders” highlights the importance of a comprehensive approach to drug use

3 March 2020, Vienna, Austria: Another side event of the 63rd CND session was organized by the Government of North Macedonia in cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the "Green Crescent" and UNODC — "Prevention without Borders: Effective Drug Policy in the context of the Balkans". The countries of the region were represented at the Ambassador’s, Deputy Minister and State Secretary level and were complemented by the subject matter experts, the representatives of the national chapters of the "Green Crescent" civil society organization and UNODC. The discussion revolved around the current drug demand reduction initiatives and policies in the region, successful results achieved and the way forward. The participants focused on the need to put special emphasis on children and the environment in which they grow up. The importance of public oriented drug policies and impact was highlighted, as well as the need for continuous education of different groups in the society. The connection of successful drug prevention policies to the EU accession path was also underscored by several participants, including from the civil society. The panel included various sectors of governments, civil society and UNODC thus allowing for a discussion covering different angles of the topic. The UNODC-led LQSA programme was cited as good practice of a school-based social emotional learning initiative to prevent or delay the onset of drug use among young adolescents with encouraging results in South Eastern Europe, where the programme is implemented since 2014 by UNODC and the Lions Club Foundation, having reached to date 7,700 children, 472 educators/trainers in 185 schools over 5 countries and 40 cities and municipalities in the region. Furthermore, UNODC supports the countries of the region in drug demand reduction through capacity building events and other initiatives aimed at strengthening the overall response to drug use. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina the UNODC family skills initiative - Strong Families programme, will be implemented in collaboration with the Community Service Organization (CSO) “Celebrate the Recovery” (Proslav Oporavak) in Sarajevo starting in May 2020. In Albania, UNODC supported the organization of the first Universal Treatment Curriculum (UTC) "walkthrough" training workshop in early 2020, aimed at strengthening the national system of treatment of substance use disorders in line with the international practices and will continue this work. The side event, attended by over 90 people, concluded with a discussion on the ways to increase cooperation in the field of drug demand reduction and the importance of pursuing efforts in this field.

UNODC supported Serbia-Belarus drug use prevention dialogue

20-21 February 2020, Belgrade, Serbia: UNODC in cooperation with the Serbian Office for Combating Drugs supported a study visit for the national professionals and policymakers from Belarus to Serbia. The delegates represented institutions addressing drug demand reduction, particularly among youth, including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Interior and the General Prosecutor’s Office. The study visit aimed to present the good practices in the field of drug use prevention, enhance communication and facilitate exchange between the participants and the relevant entities for an improved response to drug use prevention in Belarus. During the study visit, the participants got acquainted with the national coordination mechanism of the Office for Combating Drugs, the interventions and policies implemented in the local community and schools by the counterpart institutions in Serbia and discussed the evidence-based drug use prevention interventions and their application at the municipality level using the example of the Belgrade township Zvezdara. Other initiatives in this area were also presented, including the "Line up Live Up" programme, recently launched in SEE by UNODC and the OSCE mission in Serbia. In addition, a strong emphasis was placed on the importance of the evidence-based approaches and of the recurrent use of the UNODC-WHO International Standards on drug use prevention as one of the key documents for achieving progress in drug demand reduction. The guests found the presented materials useful and adaptable to their national context. The study visit was supported by the Ukrainian UNFPA, UNICEF and UNAIDS Offices under the overall guidance of the UNODC.

UNODC supported the organization of the first training on treatment of persons with drug use disorders in Albania

3-7 February 2020, Tirana, Albania: UNODC supported the organization of the first Universal Treatment Curriculum (UTC) "walkthrough" training workshop for 25 national professionals and academic experts from Albania and Kosovo under the UNSCR 1244. The training was facilitated by three certified local UTC trainers and represents the first in a series of two walkthrough workshops on drug dependence treatment and care, focusing on psychology and pharmacology for addiction professionals; treatment of substance use disorders and continuum of care; common co-occurring mental and medical disorders and basic counselling skills. Upon the completion of the training, certified educators created a precise workplan to share the acquired knowledge with students and service providers and, in doing so, strengthened the national system of treatment of substance use disorders in line with the international practices. The training was funded by the Drug Advisory Programme (DAP) of the Colombo Plan - Chilean Office and coordinated by the University of California San Diego. It uses the UTC training package, as the internationally certified compendium of the evidence-based services and information for the skill development of treatment professionals. This work is supported by the Government of the USA. (For info on all of the above: Milos Stojanovic)
UNODC launches a new border control initiative in South Eastern Europe

UNODC continues its partnership with the EU the launch of a new initiative aimed at fighting organized crime, by supporting more effective and coordinated responses to illicit trafficking at land and port border crossing points and international airports in the Western Balkans. In January 2020, in the framework of the RP SEE, UNODC successfully initiated a new EU-UNODC joint action promoting rule of law and good governance through targeted border control measures at ports and airports in South Eastern Europe. The action involves the UNODC-WCO Container Control Programme (CCP) and the UNODC-WCO-INTERPOL Airport Communication Project (AIRCOP) under the umbrella of the RP SEE and is carried out in:

- Bosnia and Herzegovina (land border crossing points Bijača and Gradiška and international airport of Sarajevo)
- Montenegro (port of Bar)
- North Macedonia (international airport of Skopje)
- Serbia (international airport of Belgrade)
- Kosovo under UNSCR 1244 (land border crossing point Vrmčić).

The action supports the implementation of the UN Conventions on drugs and crime and the EU Acquis, notably the Chapters 23 and 24 addressing serious organized crime, rule of law, good governance and security. The action improves effectiveness and develops synergies between law enforcement actors at the national, regional and international levels and builds bridges between various thematic areas as well as between the Western Balkans and other regions, improving the security situation in the Western Balkans and Europe as a whole.

To assess and monitor the project’s progress and achievements, the action will be governed by an Action Steering Committee which will meet annually with the presence of the relevant stakeholders including the national authorities, the project partners, including the European Union Law Enforcement Agency (EUROPOL) and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) as well as the Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), donor of the action, and other EU institutions.

Visibility forms an important element of this action, as well as the rest of UNODC work in this region. As such UNODC promotes the doing of this action and other work, and produces action specific visibility items and updates, including a separate newsletter where more information about this work is available.

It is in this context, on 17 January 2020 in Warsaw, Poland, UNODC organized senior level consultations with FRONTEX on the future cooperation in line with the RP SEE. The consultations are directly following the overall strategy line of the UNODC - European Commission relations, which encourages a closer dialogue between the Office and relevant EU institutions. The talks focused in particular on the potential cooperation in the area of border control, including in the context of the recently launched UNODC joint action promoting border control measures at ports and airports in the region of SEE. UNODC and FRONTEX agreed to step up coordination, exchange of information and mutual engagement into practical work in SEE and beyond.

On 16-18 September 2019, Skopje, North Macedonia; 2-4 October 2019, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina; 5-6 December 2019, Belgrade, Serbia; 20-23 January 2020, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina: UNODC met with the national authorities in the region to discuss the ongoing cooperation and the future initiatives under the UNODC RP SEE, particularly in the area of border control and illicit trafficking, including the upcoming border control action, the related involvement of UNODC and areas of increased cooperation. In this context, UNODC formally introduced the Regional Serious and Organized Crime Advisor and Head of the enhanced UNODC Programme Office in North Macedonia, who will be involved in the coordination of the borders project with the national authorities in the region.

Following these consultations, UNODC kicked off the action by conducting the first assessment mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, during which the project team met with the national authorities, i.e. Ministry of Security, Ministry of Communications and Transport, Indirect Taxation Authority (ITA), Border Police, Directorate for Coordination of Police Bodies, State Investigation and Protection Agency, Service for Foreigners’ Affairs, and Directorate for Civil Aviation, to formally introduce the project and its objectives and discuss the coordination of activities. The UNODC project team also met with the Sarajevo Airport Authority and carried out a technical assessment of this airport. The next key step is the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between UNODC and the national authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which will set the framework for the future implementation of the project.

On 14-18 February 2020 in Gradiška, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as part of the project, UNODC has successfully conducted a technical assessment mission of the land border/customs terminal at Gradiška, Bosnia and Herzegovina. This activity represents a continuation of the excellent cooperation between the CCP and the ITA and the Border Police, the main stakeholders in the implementation of the CCP in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Border Inspection Point (BIP) at Gradiška is an important entry point to Bosnia and Herzegovina’s customs territory, with some of the highest volumes in the traffic of goods and passengers. BIP Gradiška has been selected as a designated site for the establishment of a PCU, which will be a joint effort between the CCP and the national authorities towards strengthening border security and countering transnational organized crime and illicit trafficking. In preparation to the establishment of the PCU, UNODC met with the management and other senior officials of the ITA and Border Police and visited
BIP Gradiška to familiarize with the current situation of the recently relocated customs terminal, as well as to review the general state of affairs with regard to major threats, challenges and prospects of goods trafficked through this BIP between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. Furthermore, UNODC observed the work of frontline officers in conducting documentary profiling and risk-analyses, as well as physical risk controls, including x-ray scanning of cargo. The technical assessors and officials of the ITA and the Border Police discussed the establishment of the PCU, its operationalization and the follow-up arrangements for cooperation between the national stakeholders. On 25-27 February 2020 in Bar, Montenegro and in Bijea, Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNODC performed an initial series of monitoring visits to the PCUs in SEE, during which the PCUs maintain their regular activities and present the daily work conducted at their respective seaports and land-border/customs points. The CCP concept of monitoring visits is based on partnerships with customs administrations of member states, through the principles of mutual cooperation and responsibility, as well as sharing of knowledge on new experiences and approaches to specific themes in the fight against transnational organized crime. UNODC used the opportunity to present activities planned throughout 2020 for the PCUs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. Amongst other topics, discussions were also held concerning current challenges faced by PCU staff in their daily work. On 3 March 2020 in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina: Cooperation between the ITA of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Customs Administration of the Republic of Serbia via efficient information exchange represents one of the most important activities in preventing cross-border criminal activities and increasing efficiency of revenue collections for both countries. With the support of the UNODC, the ITA of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Serbian Customs Administration organized a technical level meeting to discuss the continuation of cooperation aimed at facilitating detections and successful interdictions of various forms of cross-border criminal activities. The meeting resulted in several conclusions concerning future points of cooperation within the border control action. On 11-13 March 2020 in Belgrade, Serbia, UNODC conducted the second scoping mission in the framework of the project and met with the national authorities, including the Ministries of Interior, Transport, Communication and Infrastructure (Civil Aviation), the Customs Administration, the Border Police Directorate and the Criminal Police Directorate to formally introduce the project and discuss future implementation, in particular the air cargo aspect of the CCP component. UNODC also visited the Belgrade Nikola Tesla Airport and carried out a technical assessment through further discussion with customs and border police structures on site. (For info: Alen Gagula and Bill Wood)

Air Cargo Control Unit opens in Tirana

6 February 2020, Tirana, Albania: While the above action is not directly supporting the Albanian authorities, the work in Albania in the field of border control at ports and airports is ongoing and is supported by other sources. With this in mind, the official opening of the Air Cargo Control Unit (ACCU) took place at the Tirana International Airport. The event was organized in the framework of the CCP, supported by the Governments of France and Germany, and implemented in partnership with the Albanian State Police and Customs Administration. The event was attended by the senior officials representing the Ministry of Interior, the State Police and the Customs Administration, as well as other partners including the European Union, France, Germany and the United States. The Albanian officials emphasized that this CCP segment would further enhance the security and resilience of the global supply chain through a risk-based and multi-layered approach to cargo security and harmonisation of national and international standards, enhancing the partnership with other countries with the purpose of developing and adopting cargo security policies and practical and operable measures. In addition, the ceremony marked the signing of the Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) on the functioning of the Air Cargo Control Unit by the Directors General of Customs and Police. The document supports cooperation and coordination among all actors involved in border security and standardizing relevant procedures and practices. The Albanian, UNODC and WCO officials, together with other participants, attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony of the unit’s premises located at the cargo terminal of the Tirana International Airport. The CCP work in the Tirana International Airport is complementary to the large-scale border control intervention supported by the EU, whereby ACCUs and Joint Airport Interdiction Task Forces are established in three other airports in the region, and other CCP work is implemented throughout the Western Balkans. Prior to the launch of the ACCU and on the occasion of the visit to the region, the Senior CCP Programme Coordinators from UNODC and WCO visited Pristina and met with senior management of the Customs of Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244) and other counterparts on 5 February, to discuss the programme’s implementation in Kosovo under UNSCR 1244 to date and the way forward, as well as to provide positive feedback on the progress made so far. (For info: Ela Banaj)