2003 Annual Activity Report
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATTF</td>
<td>Anti-Terrorism Task Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEA</td>
<td>Drug Enforcement Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>DHS</td>
<td>Department of Homeland Security</td>
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<td>EULEC</td>
<td>European Institute for Law Enforcement Cooperation</td>
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<td>FBI</td>
<td>Federal Bureau of Investigation</td>
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<tr>
<td>GUUAM</td>
<td>Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICMPD</td>
<td>International Center for Migration Policy and Development</td>
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<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organization for Migration</td>
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<td>JCC</td>
<td>Joint Cooperation Committee</td>
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<td>NFP</td>
<td>National Focal Point</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>MOU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
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<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe</td>
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<td>OSD</td>
<td>Operational Support Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>RACVIAC</td>
<td>Regional Arms Control and Verification Information and Assistance Center</td>
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<td>SALW</td>
<td>Small Arms and Light Weapons</td>
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<td>SECI</td>
<td>Southeast European Cooperative Initiative</td>
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<td>SECI Center</td>
<td>SECI Regional Center for Combating Transborder Crime</td>
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<td>SEE</td>
<td>South East Europe</td>
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<td>SEEPAG</td>
<td>South East European Prosecutors Advisory Group</td>
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<td>SEESAC</td>
<td>South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons</td>
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<td>SPOC</td>
<td>Stability Pact initiative to fight Organized Crime</td>
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<td>TF</td>
<td>Task Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>THB</td>
<td>Trafficking in Human Beings</td>
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<td>USSS</td>
<td>United States Secret Service</td>
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<td>WCO</td>
<td>World Customs Organization</td>
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<td>WMD</td>
<td>Weapons of Mass Destruction</td>
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<td>ZKA</td>
<td>German Customs Administration (Zoll Kriminal Amt)</td>
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1 Forewords

1.1. JCC Chairman, Romanian European Integration Minister, Alexandru Farcas

As my mandate as Chairman of the Joint Cooperation Committee is coming to an end, I would like to make a short analysis of the overall activity of the SECI Center during these past 2 years, and strongly emphasize how magnificently it has evolved and developed in time.

It all started only a few years ago, when the countries in the South East European region decided to join efforts and fight against organized transborder crime together, and as time went by, it grew into a more and more successful cooperation. The amazing results yielded in 2001 during the first regional operations led to an increase in the number of Member and Observer Countries willing to get involved in the Center’s activities, as well as in an augmented exchange of information throughout SEE, thus improving cooperation with both regional and non-regional law enforcement agencies in 2002 and 2003.

The high professionalism and dedication of the Liaison Officers were crucial for all achievements, and in these 3 years we were honoured to work with a large number of exceptionally qualified law enforcement specialists.

The Joint Cooperation Committee strived hard in order to accomplish all of its tasks and responsibilities, monitoring the operational activities of the Center, facilitating and increasing the cooperation among Member and Observer Countries and international partner institutions, overseeing the budgetary procedures and making all necessary decisions so that everything ran smoothly.

Together, we managed to fulfil a dream, together we managed to improve the lives of our people and ensure their safety, together we managed to provide a more reliable and prosperous economic environment, so that our countries can steadily progress toward the integration into the European Union. But this is only the beginning. I am confident that the powerful human and technical resources of this institution will continue to result into further successes, as the SECI Center’s goals can and will be put into practice by the countries’ dedication to eradicate trans-national organized crime.
It is my great pleasure to present the **2003 Annual Activity Report** of the SECI Regional Center. Last year, the SECI Center focused on continuing its mission to combat trans-border organized crime by strengthening and extending its cooperation network with law enforcement authorities at the level of the Southeast European region and beyond it, in order to increase the exchange of information, as well as by coordinating operational activities in several fields of interest, such as trafficking in human beings, trafficking in drugs, and stolen vehicles. Progress has been made in all areas, but efforts will continue to be made so that we can ensure and optimize these developments.

I want to welcome the establishment in 2003 of two new Task Forces in our operational structure: the first one, the Anti-Terrorism Task Force, was established in February 2003, based on a decision of the Joint Cooperation Committee; the second one, the Anti-Fraud & Anti-Smuggling Task Force, is the result of a merger between two previous Task Forces, as an analysis indicated that such a move is recommended in order to avoid overlapping and duplication of efforts, and to use available resources more effectively.

I also want to underline the permanent interest shown by the SECI Center in terms of enhancing our communication facilities, as well as our goal to establish an Information System, thus improving the exchange and analysis of intelligence for operational purposes. A first step in this regard was the recruitment of a criminal analyst within the Operational Support Department. By conducting detailed analyses of the specific crimes in Southeast Europe, the analyst is developing an efficient regional threat assessment. Thus, the SECI Center is filling in an important gap and its future goal is to be able to provide a kind of Early Warning System.

A second step was represented by a joint project, supported by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, which was intended to increase the existing capacities of the National Focal Points, in an effort to bring them to the same level of communication.

Last but not least, I would like to underline our interest for putting into practice an active and broad-based promotion plan for the Center’s public image, in an effort to make the activity of the Center better known to larger audiences and to enhance the Center’s image in the national and international media.

In conclusion, the SECI Center has managed to fulfil yet another year of good results and hard work, overcoming most challenges that appeared throughout the 12 months. 2004 already includes several projects, many of them very ambitious, and, I am sure, many of them future successes.
1 Introduction

1.1. Brief history of the SECI Center

On April 15, 1998, in Geneva, the SECI Agenda Committee approved the Romanian delegation’s proposal project entitled “Prevention and Combating Trans-border Crime,” as part of the Trade and Transport Facilitation Program. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Romania and Turkey signed the “Agreement on Cooperation to Prevent and Combat Trans-border Crime” (also known as the SECI Agreement) on May 26, 1999.

The SECI Agreement entered into force on February 1, 2000. On October 2, 2000, Romania and the SECI Center signed the “Headquarters Agreement” which entered into force on April 4, 2001.

The headquarters of the SECI Regional Center is located in the Parliament Building, Bucharest, Romania

The SECI Center has modern meeting, communication and training facilities, and serves as a clearinghouse for intelligence sharing and cooperation, by providing a venue for discussions for its Member and Observer Countries.

In terms of the implementation of the legal framework, the first meeting of the Joint Cooperation Committee (which is the decision-making body of the SECI Center) took place on February 11-12, 2000, while on November 1, 2000 the SECI Center became operational.

The mission of the SECI Regional Center is to support the joint trans-border crime fighting efforts of the SECI participating countries, in order to improve the business environment in Southeast Europe and to make it more attractive for investments, with the declared aim of reaching economic and political stability in the region.

A primary objective of our organization is to improve regional cooperation in combating trans-border crime. In order to achieve this objective, the enhancement of coordinated efforts between law enforcement agencies within the individual participating states is also required. Furthermore, taking into account the global aspects of trans-border crime, cooperation with countries outside the region and representative international organizations is critical. In this respect, the SECI Center is a catalyst for efficient working relationships in making such cooperation possible.
1.2. Member States of the SECI Center

The SECI Center has 12 Member States, which are as follows: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, FYR of Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, Serbia and Montenegro, and Turkey.

1.3. Permanent Advisors

ICPO-Interpol and the World Customs Organization received Permanent Advisor status through the SECI Agreement.

The participation of INTERPOL and WCO representatives in the Center’s meetings ensures a continuous coordination, in order to prevent any duplication of resources and efforts.

1.4. Permanent Observers

The Permanent Observer status is granted by the JCC, on the basis of an exchange of letters, which define the terms and conditions of cooperation. Currently, 13 Observer States and 5 International Organizations have been granted the Permanent Observer status, as follows:

Observer States: Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Georgia, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom and the United States of America.

International Organizations: International Organization for Migration (IOM), European Institute for Law Enforcement Cooperation (EULEC), International Center for Migration Policy and Development (ICMPD), Southeast Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) and the another agreement was signed with the Special Coordinator Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, concerning the initiative to fight organized crime (SPOC).
2 Operational activity

2.1. Task Forces

The operational activity of the SECI Center is conducted in accordance with the Regulations of the SECI Center, the Strategic Plan and the Annual Action Plan. The Center provides a venue for the member countries to exchange law enforcement-related information in a quick and timely manner, as well as to coordinate multi-national investigations in the SEE region, in the framework of the Task Forces.

Each of the Task Forces is established and organized at the initiative of one of the Member States, in compliance with the General Guidelines; their activities are developed on the basis of dedicated Annual Action Plans, agreed to by the participating countries and organizations.

The SECI Center’s concept of “Task Force” is operation-focused, being an important cooperation tool. Its members, which are Liaison Officers from either the police or the customs administration of the Member States, work together and exchange information on the specific topic of the Task Force.

The Liaison Officers are the Project Managers of the Task Forces. In this regard, they have an important role in implementing regional operations by drafting the necessary documents including the terms of reference, the action plans and the evaluation reports, in close cooperation with the Task Force coordinators and the Head of the Operational Support Department.

The total number of Liaison Officer positions available within the Center is of 24 - 1 police and 1 customs officer from each Member State. At present, there are 19 Liaison Officers posted at the Center, who are seconded by each Member State and maintain permanent contact with their national authorities, through their respective designated National Focal Points. The Liaison Officers are well trained, experienced and have a strong commitment to the SECI Center’s mission. They form a unified, well-motivated team, whose results have increased the dynamics of the SECI Regional Center’s operational activity.

Since the establishment of the SECI Center, the Member Countries have identified a number of organized transborder crime target domains, among which: the trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants, the trafficking in drugs, the trafficking in stolen vehicles, the financial and computer crimes, the commercial frauds and customs valuation offences, and terrorism.

As compared to 2002, certain changes took place at the level of the Task Forces: two previous Task Forces (the Commercial Fraud and the Customs Valuation Fraud TF) merged in order to avoid overlapping and duplication of efforts, and consequently formed the Anti-Smuggling & Anti-Fraud Task Force, while another very complex Task Force, the Anti-Terrorism TF, was established in order to cover a wide range of terrorism-related issues.

There are currently six active Task Forces within the SECI Center, as follows:
1. The Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings

The THB Task Force was established in 2000 and is coordinated by the initiating country, Romania. It is actively cooperating with U.S. agencies, such as: FBI, Department of Homeland Security, as well as international organizations and institutions: the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Center for Migration Policy Development, OSCE, INTERPOL, EUROPOL, and the Stability Pact Task Force of Trafficking in Human Beings. This TF focuses on coordinating regional efforts aimed at identifying the criminal groups that are dealing with trafficking in human beings, conducting common investigations against those criminal groups and identifying trafficked persons, as well as taking efficient measures to their repatriation.

2. The Drugs Task Force

The coordinator of this Task Force is Bulgaria. This TF was established in XXX and works in close cooperation with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the German Customs Administration (ZKA) and with other related institutions.

The main goal of this Task Force is to focus on impeding trafficking in drugs bound to Western Europe and to Eastern Europe, on the various branches of the Balkan Route and the Silk Route, as well as to enhance the existing regional counter-drug collaboration.
3. The Task Force on Financial and Computer crimes

Financial and computer crimes are some of the most sophisticated and advanced criminal phenomena. The current trend in the scheme of financial crime shows that criminals exploit HI Tech for illegal purposes, thus causing important damages not just to individuals, but also to businesses and institutions around the world. In order to develop the most effective law enforcement cooperation, FYR of Macedonia initiated the establishment of a Financial and Computer Crime Task Force, which is supported by the US Secret Service, the representatives of the payment cards industry (Visa-Master Card), Interpol and Europol. This TF aims at exchanging information on counterfeit currency and payment cards, money laundering cases, computer crimes and training of law enforcement officials in the region on these issues.

4. The Task Force on Stolen Vehicles

The motor vehicle crime is still an enormous challenge for law enforcement agencies in Southeast Europe. Most countries in the region have no centralized and computerized databases for legally registered vehicles and required checks can only be made manually by their local authorities. Therefore, strengthening international cooperation is important in terms of the harmonization of the car registration and circulation systems. In this regard, Hungary initiated the establishment of a Task Force on Stolen Vehicles. The goals of this Task Force are to exchange information regarding national vehicle registration, to review the vehicle originality system in every SECI member state, and to increase the control over and the activity rule of vehicle trade companies, by establishing a database.
5. The Anti-Smuggling & Anti-Fraud Task Force
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The Anti-Fraud & Anti-Smuggling Task Force is jointly co-coordinated by Albania and Croatia. This Task Force is the result of a merger, at the beginning of June 2003, between two previously established Task Forces on customs-related issues.

Based on an analysis conducted to explore the possibility of such a merger from professional, organizational, and financial points of view, customs experts had agreed that, in order to avoid overlapping and duplication of efforts, and to use available resources more effectively, those two Task Forces should merge. The main objective of this TF is to establish solid and reliable channels for intelligence exchange regarding import and export transactions. Because valuation fraud is the most common customs offence, it makes a lot of sense to try to ensure the coverage of commodities most traded in the region.

6. The Anti-Terrorism Task Force (ATTF)
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This Task Force was established in February 2003, under the coordination of Turkey, by the approval of the Joint Cooperation Committee. It includes three sub-projects, namely:

* Task Force on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW);
* Task Force on Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD); and
* Task Force on Anti-Terrorism

which are led by Albania, Romania and Turkey, respectively. The aim of this Task Force is to organize law enforcement activities and carry out regional coordination to prevent, detect,
investigate and combat terrorism related crimes. These activities will be carried out in accordance with the existing, the new laws and within the international legal framework. The goals are to identify and analyze information on terrorist groups who participate in terrorist activities. Additionally, the Task Force will concentrate to discern the nexus between terrorism and organized crime groups dealing with drugs, human beings, SALW and WMD trafficking. By so doing, proactive initiatives will also be developed on financial resources, and assets of terrorist networks in order to disable the financial resources of terrorist organizations.

2.2. Regional Operations

During 2003, in accordance with its Annual Action Plan, the SECI Center coordinated the implementation of six regional operations: two in the field of drug trafficking, within the framework of Operation Containment II, one in trafficking in human beings, code-named Mirage 2003, which was a follow-up to Operation Mirage 2002, one in trafficking in stolen vehicles, code-named Operation Road Show and another operation focusing on customs valuation fraud, named Operation Cusval 2.

Results:

* Operation Containment II, aimed at combating trafficking in drugs, was conducted on the basis of shared intelligence between participating Southeast European countries, ZKA and DEA. The operation included three phases: the first phase, Operation Orient Express, targeted passenger trains as means of transport and was conducted in December 2002, the second one, code-named Operation E 70, which targeted tourist buses and passenger cars, and the third one, Operation Speedway, targeted commercial cargo trucks. Throughout the three phases of Containment II, significant seizures were made by the law enforcement authorities of the participant countries: 123,898 kilograms of heroin, 63.16 kilograms of amphetamine, 6,838 MDMA tablets, 163,479 kilograms of marijuana, 17.95 kilograms of raw opium and over half a kilogram of cocaine. Additional seizures included over 100,000 cartons of cigarettes, 2,485 kilograms of gold, 1,372 mobile telephones, three grenades, a gun and 353,454 cartridges. A total of 60 arrests were made.

* The continuation of Operation Mirage, code-named Mirage 2003, was conducted in September last year and focused exclusively on trafficked women. During this operation, there were 463 identified victims of trafficking, and 65 victims assisted by IOM and NGOs. Also, from the total number of 595 traffickers identified, 207 were charged during or after the operational period and 31 were convicted. The SECI Center made significant efforts in order to assist in the conviction of the traffickers, by increasing its cooperation with the representatives of the national prosecutorial authorities.

* In mid-July 2003, Hungary and the SECI Regional Center for Combating Transborder Crime co-coordinated a two-day region-wide operation targeting stolen vehicles. Operation Road Show focused on the transit route of stolen vehicles smuggled from Western Europe to and through SEE. During the operational period, 298 vehicles (valued in excess of 1,330,850 Euro) were reported stolen in the SECI region. 31 cars, which had been stolen from Germany,
Italy, Croatia, Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Holland, Poland, Great Britain, Sweden and Bulgaria, were seized. The total estimated value of these vehicles was of Euro 891,500.

4. **Trainings/seminars**

The SECI Regional Center offers an excellent framework for joint police or customs trainings, as it is endowed with modern equipments and includes a training area for approximately 80 participants. In 2003, the Center hosted 7 specialized training courses, covering various domains of interest for law enforcement specialists from the Member Countries, as follows:

- February 11-14, 2003: FBI Seminar on Weapons of Mass Destruction Criminal Investigation
- April 7-11, 2003: DEA Regional Narcotics Interdiction Seminar
- May 14-16, 2003: Seminar Romania/Bulgaria on EU Border Integration (aimed at improving the efficiency of the border controls in four border points located on the Romanian-Bulgarian frontier)
- September 8-12, 2003: Environmental Criminal Investigations course
- September 22-25, 2003: SALW and Criminal Firearms Intelligence Course
- September 29-October 3, 2003: Professional Ethics course
- October 13-17, 2003, Seminar on Border Security for Romanian and Moldovan experts (co-organized with Regione Piemonte, Italy)

![Liaison Officers attending a training course at the SECI Regional Center](image)

5. **Public Relations**

In 2003, new efforts were made to establish an active and broad-based marketing plan and to raise public awareness on the activity of the SECI Regional Center. For this purpose, in the Center recruited a Public Affairs Officer. This significantly increased the SECI Center’s PR
and Communication capabilities, as we now issue regular press releases and information updates, we have a quarterly newsletter and organize frequent press events, all of which led to a bigger number of requests for interviews from the local and international media.

Throughout 2003, 17 press releases and information documents were issued to the local and international media; the Center also organized 6 press conferences and more than 30 press inquiries, made via telephone, email or fax received timely answers. The Public Affairs Officer coordinated and facilitated 22 interviews with various media outlets for the members of the SECI management team, as follows:

- 10 broadcast media interviews, including BBC World Service, CNN Turkey, MSNBC, SBS TV Australia network, German Public Radio (ARD)

The biggest event of the year was the Second Annual Meeting of the SECI Center member states Chiefs of Police and Customs Administrations, which took place on May 26, 2003. This meeting was an opportunity for the SECI Center to present its 2002 Annual Activity Report, as well as to increase the level of cooperation and the joint efforts of the Member and Observer countries in the fight against organized crime.

The Public Affairs Officer established, maintained and developed contacts with various local and international journalists, and public affairs officials of national law enforcement agencies and international organizations and updated the SECI Center website on a regular basis.

Numerous high level visits took place in 2003, as the activity of the Center and its excellent operational results continued to draw more and more attention and interest from both Member Countries officials, as well as from other countries.

Thus, in May we received the visit of the Interior Minister of FYR of Macedonia, Mr. Hari Kostov, in July a high-level German delegation, led by Interior Ministry Secretary of State, Lutz Diwell, the visit of the Director of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) Justice Department, Paul Coffey, and the visit of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and SECI Special Coordinator of Coordinator, Dr. Erhard Busek, as well as two other high-level visits, one from Serbia and Montenegro, led by Mr. Dusan Mihajlovici, Vice Prime-Minister and Minister of Internal Affairs and another one from Israel, by the Minister of Public Security, Mr. Tzachi Hanegbi. The US Secret Service Director, Mr. Ralph Basham, visited the Center in September, and his visit was followed at the end of November by that of the Europol Director, Mr. Jurgen Storbeck.
6 International Cooperation

In 2003 there were negotiated and signed the following Memoranda of Understanding:

1. Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation between the Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and the SECI Regional Center for Combating Trans-border Crime, concerning the Stability Pact Organized Crime (SPOC) initiative;
2. Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation between South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) and SECI Regional Center for Combating Trans-border Crime;

The relations between the SECI Center and ICPO Interpol and World Customs Organization continuously improved. Representatives of the Center participated in various meetings of common interest organized by the two institutions. In order not to duplicate our efforts we shall continue to cooperate with the two main professional organizations of our law enforcement authorities.

In 2003 a meeting was held with representatives of the WCO management, which was followed by the continuation of the negotiations on the text of the memorandum of understanding on cooperation. The text is already agreed upon. Pending the approval of the JCC, it would be signed in 2004.

The SECI Center also initiated discussions with ICPO Interpol for the establishment of direct access opportunities for the Center’s Liaison Officers to the Interpol I-24/7 system. Negotiations will continue in 2004 and it is expected that an agreement will be signed very soon.

The Center also launched in 2003 an assistance program to the GUUAM project. Experts from SECI Center and from some of its Member Countries provided technical expertise and advice to the two working groups, the GUUAM working group in Baku and the GUUAM working group in Kiev. The know-how offered consisted in the preparation of legal documents, IT and network connectivity matters and others.

The establishment of an information system within the SECI Center was yet another important item on the international cooperation agenda; discussions on this issue began in 2003. In compliance with JCC decision, the Legal/Internal Department in close cooperation with the
Operational Support Department started to work on proposal for setting up databases within the SECI Regional Center. The SECI Center hosted in July 2003 an expert meeting, which was attended by experts on personal data protection and criminal analysts from SECI Center Member Countries, as well as by representatives of several Observer Countries. All delegations agreed that an information system, with common databases, should be set up. That was a very important step for the improvement of the operational activities of the member states’ law enforcement services.

An important step in the efficient fight against trans-border crime is the coordination of the law enforcement authorities’ efforts; it is equally essential to set up good relations between law enforcement authorities and prosecutor’s offices in the region. This is part of a strategy for ensuring close cooperation between the Law Enforcement Authorities and Judicial Authorities. In this respect and according to an initiative of Serbia and Montenegro for setting-up a Regional Prosecutorial Group, the Joint Cooperation Committee at its 17th Session in October 2003 empowered the Management of the SECI Regional Center to provide support and facilitate the activity of this group. In December 2003, during the First Meeting of the South East European Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG), which was organized in Belgrade, the group was formally established. On that occasion, the SEEPAG adopted its first Declaration. The next meeting will be held in 2004 in Bucharest.

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