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PRESS RELEASE

WOMEN'S BORDER MANAGEMENT AWARENESS COURSE

EU-BOMNAF Project has completed the second Women's Border Management Awareness (WBMA) Course at the OSCE Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Eighteen women from the Afghan Border Police joined two female officers from the Tajikistan Border Force and three from Tajikistan's Drug Control Agency. Together they received instruction in a range of subjects including Anti-corruption, First Aid, Gender Equality, Human Rights, Trafficking in Humans & Drugs, and Leadership & Management. The experts who delivered this instruction were also women, which encouraged the free exchange of opinions and experiences between students and experts.

The women on the course benefited greatly from the opportunity to share experiences with officers from another country's border forces and together learn new skills. Forming approximately 1% of the force, women in the Afghan Border Police are in a very small minority and work in an often challenging physical and cultural environment. Their Tajik colleagues have gained a better understanding of these challenges, and they and the visiting experts were able to offer encouragement and proof that things can improve.

During the first week the Project was delighted to welcome Ms Wagma Sapay to address the students on measures that are being taken in Afghanistan to promote Gender Equality and Women's Rights. Ms Sapay is a Member of the Afghan House of Representatives, and for many years was herself an officer in the Afghanistan Border Police.

British expert, Annita Clarke, who delivered a two day workshop in Leadership and Management, is a Police Inspector from the United Kingdom. In 2013 Annita was awarded the title of International Police Officer of the Year and is an active member of the International Association of Women Police. She shared her experience of having to overcome institutional bias against women during her 27 years in the British Police, and encouraged the women on the course to share their own annoyances and successes.

This was Annita's first visit to Tajikistan and she greatly enjoyed the opportunity to meet the students. She had this to say about her experience: 'The opportunity to train such an outstandingly motivated group of women was a real privilege. I was impressed by their candour about their working lives, and also by how well the Afghan and Tajik Officers collaborated in class. It was clear that they empathized with one another's struggles and were eager to learn more about themselves. They were an absolute pleasure to teach and assured me that they intended to use their new skills when they returned to work.'

The students also played an active part in a Round Table study day, which examined "Afghanistan-Central Asian Perspectives on Regional Security". They joined students from the Border Management Staff College's Women Staff Officers' Course to hear some extremely interesting presentations. The Day's Keynote Speakers welcomed the perspectives that our students brought to the Question and Answer sessions.

Each Student and Expert on the Border Management Awareness Course received a shoulder bag hand-made for them by Afghan women from the Refugees, Children and Vulnerable Citizens (RCVC) Workshop in Dushanbe. EU-BOMNAF is pleased to support this organisation's excellent work.

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