



Talking points
by Hido Biscevic, Secretary General, Regional Cooperation Council
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- At the outset, allow me to thank our host and to congratulate the Montenegrin SEECP Chairmanship for the initiative to put among its priorities the organization of a defense ministerial conference.
- This conference comes at the important moment for South East Europe.
- Security dimension of a current state of play in our part of Europe needs to be carefully considered, as part of a comprehensive strategic outlook at the political challenges and social developments.
- Disparity between the Euro and Euro-Atlantic advancement of our region and, on the other side, the landscape of still unfinished peace clearly represents a security challenge.
- This makes all forms of security cooperation in the region so strategically important. This is why it is essential that security cooperation add value to current positive tendencies of rapprochement, reconciliation and general relaxation of relations in the region.
- One should also note another serious security challenge in the region – that is, possible creation of a strategic vacuum in the Western Balkans should the open issues remain unresolved for unwanted prolonged period of time, thus hampering EU and Euro-Atlantic advancement and bringing in different competing interests, a development that would be particularly serious

against the backdrop of current developments on the southern rims of the Mediterranean.

- In this light, our cooperation in security sector gains even greater importance.
- In addition, it is necessary to combine our effort to streamline and strategically plan our resources that we have to honestly admit as being limited.
- Therefore a regional commitment for this process is more than needed.
- The role of regional cooperation in this sensitive area of defense is even more evident than in any others and RCC has put this area among its top priorities. Any small progress achieved in the regional security cooperation is immediately noticed and carefully evaluated.
- Several Initiatives and Task Forces are working successfully under the auspices of the RCC. The Center for Security Cooperation (RACVIAC), the South East European Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) and the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative (DPPI) have proven their effectiveness and have full support of the majority of the SEECP countries.
- The RCC's role is one of coordination and further enhancement of their activities for a better response to the region's needs, and to bring synergy among all SEE initiatives and task forces. The ultimate aim is to achieve a full regional ownership.
- The RCC Secretariat developed a Strategy and Work Programme for 2011-2013, with concrete goals and activities developed in close coordination with NATO and the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, which were endorsed by the SEECP Summit in Istanbul last year.
- I would want to stress in particular the importance of the Regional Cooperation Council, as a focal point for regional cooperation, in preserving and strengthening the stability in South East Europe through a regionally owned framework in which initiatives such as the Defense Policy Directors

Forum, organized in the SEECP format, is an effective mean to streamline and seek synergy in defense cooperation.

- I appreciate that it is the right time to use this format for initiating a debate on the relation between existing regional initiatives in SEE and the strategic and security needs of the SEECP countries.
- We also have to welcome and fully support in this ministerial format the efforts of the Heads of Military Intelligence Agencies of the SEECP countries to establish a mechanism of effective regional cooperation under the patronage of the Military Intelligence Directorate of the EU.
- RCC Secretariat has successfully initiated since the beginning of this year consultations for launching the SEE Forum of the Heads of National Security Authorities with both the EU structures, such as the General Secretariat of the Council and the External Action Service, and with the NATO's Euro-Atlantic Integration and Partnership Directorate, NATO Office for Security (NOS), as well as with the Political Affairs and Security Policy Division.
- Another important area that needs your attention is that of further experience sharing and cooperation among SEE countries on matters related to defense sector transformation, having in mind that it bears social and economic consequences.
- There is a clear rationale behind the need for a reduction in defense spending and it requires a fundamental change in defense policies, management and practices. There are, however, lessons to be learnt from other similar experiences in the region. In this context I would propose to welcome the joint initiative of SEECP CiO, NATO, RCC and RACVIAC on organizing a regional meeting of Defense Procurement Directors exploring the possibilities for expanding regional cooperation to this key area.
- I'd like to end with a call to encourage further development of the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative into an effective regional mechanism for consultation and coordination of the efforts in this area.

- One of the main tasks of DPPI SEE is to bring the participants' political strategies in line with one another and especially with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, to coordinate existing and new initiatives in the region and, thereby, to help avoid unnecessary duplication of work. In my recent meeting with the EU Commissioner Georgieva, I was clearly requested to put the RCC Secretariat's resources for transforming the DPPI in the specialized regional interlocutor for the EU in this important area.
- Wishing us all a successful work, let me conclude by stressing again the importance of a comprehensive cooperation in security area in accomplishing the ultimate goal of our countries – European and Euro-Atlantic integration.
- Thank you for your attention.