



Sixth Regional (Jumbo) Security Coordination Conference

“Enhancing regional security cooperation: A pillar of the European path of the Western Balkans”

6 December 2021, Paris

Talking Points by the Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council Majlinda Bregu

Dear Lieutenant-General Benoît Durieux,

Dear Mr. Frédéric Mondoloni,

Dear guests,

- I am pleased to notice that in this sixth year that we organise this annual regional security conference we have come a long way together, committed to a single overarching focus: increased regional security cooperation. Today this focus is no less relevant than when we first ventured into this endeavour. Multiplication of new and existing European challenges but at the same time also old conflicts, which seem to never die, be it in Afghanistan or elsewhere, have the potential to heavily affect our fragile region.
- Nevertheless, six years after the first Jumbo conference we can say with confidence that together we have put in place a mechanism that provides space and opportunities for regionally coordinated actions.
- I would like to thank the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of France for supporting our joint endeavours and for hosting us in this beautiful venue. Luckily, digital age enabled us to keep this conference going even during the pandemic, but I believe I speak on everybody’s behalf when I say that I am glad we are able to meet in person– with appropriate measure and distance, of course.

- EU and WB security challenges are becoming more and more interrelated and more and more related to a set of a new global threats. We have to face that we are at an inflection point. We might soon be facing a crisis—a humanitarian and security crisis. As security issues are common, common and collective should also be our response.
- Our joint efforts boil down to a concept which is readily understood by each and every citizen: security. This means personal security, security of our property and possessions, it means absence of fear and uncertainty. It means resilience to radicalism and extremism, effective border security and sensible migration management, the uprooting of organised crime and related activities.
- Currently, only 37% of Western Balkan citizens are satisfied with the security situation in their economy, and less than a third anticipate improvement over the next 12 months. About two thirds or more believe it is important to work on addressing and countering terrorism, violent extremism, migrant crisis, serious, organised and financial crime, and cybersecurity (Securimeter 2021).
- Unfortunately, it is easier said than done. Threats change, they evolve, and we must be ready to adapt our approaches accordingly, stay alert and react timely. The one constant of security threats is that they are never confined to one locality. And so the one constant in facing the security threats must be cooperation, coordination and synergy of all relevant actors.
- That is the essence of our work here today: to assess the changing landscape of security threats; to exchange information and good practices; and to find common ground for our joint way forward.
- RCC has been working hard to facilitate harmonisation of policies based on EU standards aimed toward creating a Common Regional Market which makes best use of the underutilised socio-economic potential of this region. But any progress in that regard will be undermined if security threats persist – if young people turn toward radical ideas and violent extremism instead of being productive members of society, if money is made in the grey or black markets, if the sense of insecurity contributes to brain drain, and so on.
- Turning this around, we can also note that sound socio-economic policies and a coherent vision of a prosperous future are an asset to the security situation. They are a convincing deterrent from illegal activities and radical rhetoric among the members of the population who are able to provide themselves and their families with a good standard of living.
- In other words, building a better future is comprised of multiple tenets, which are mutually reinforcing and intertwined. But each tenet is stronger the more we work together, with each other for our joint future. That future is European, prosperous, and secure.
- In light of that, I warmly welcome all participants of today's Jumbo security coordination conference and thank you for your valuable inputs and contributions. We would like to see strengthening of those connections which have already been established over the previous years,

and hopefully to make new and productive ones. I encourage you to use this opportunity to think regionally, and beyond.

- That is why I also express my sincere appreciation of the efforts of our partners, regional actors in security, namely IISG, MARRI, SEESAC and others, which are working relentlessly on a range of security issues in the Western Balkans in their respective fields.
- Finally, allow me to echo the spirit of the recent EU-WB Ministerial Forum on Justice and Home Affairs and its emphasis on the cooperation between the EU and the Western Balkans. Regardless of where the region currently stands in the EU accession process, security is not a matter which respects political processes and timelines; greater security of the Western Balkans is also a greater security of the EU – and vice versa.
- I look forward to the discussions ahead of us and wish you a productive day.
- Thank you.