

## **WB-EU ministerial meeting speech by RCC Secretary General Majlinda Bregu Berlin, 21 October 2022**

Honourable Ministers,

Today's address has every right to be a distinct one. On many grounds:

First, as we rejoice in the live demonstration that the Berlin Process is back! This process has been a visionary and pioneering one. It has also been instrumental in delivering on the connectivity, youth, green, Common Regional Market, Roma integration, security, and various other agendas in our region. And RCC has had an important role in many of its deliverables.

Second, as we proudly today showcase that all-inclusive regional cooperation and Common Regional Market deliver results. That the region has agreed on three RCC-coordinated centrepiece mobility agreements whose implementation, much like with the green lanes and regional roaming agreement, will very soon bring their own manifested impact on the ground.

Metrics we so far meticulously measured in hundreds of trucks using green lanes to deliver the much-needed food and medicines and hundreds of percent of roaming traffic increase due to the abolished roaming fees, will now also relate to: enriched regional mobile labour pool, new professional and academic opportunities, and eliminated costs for lengthy, expensive and administrative burdensome recognition processes.

All this with the aim of regional connectivity and togetherness. Regional and multilateral cooperation and solidarity come at the fore in times of crisis.

Third, despite our region's wariness of terminologies such as windows of opportunities, winds of change, new momentums, etc. – the start of accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia and the recommendation to grant Bosnia and Herzegovina candidate status are important positive milestones in reviving the enlargement process.

Fourth. Movement with ID cards in the Western Balkans is the agreement of today. It really took us almost two years of intensive negotiations to get the consensual version, hereby today. As most processes related to our region are and will continue to be – nerve-racking, taking more time, necessitating serious political and diplomatic capital invested on all sides, both from the WB governments, as well as our German and EU partners. But where there is a will, there is a way. This agreement tears down the last remaining visa wall in the region. The Kosovar and Bosnian and Herzegovinian one. For someone this was too little when we proposed it, for somebody else was not that important. I know, no visa regime in the Western Balkans is not the same as no visa regime for Kosovars with the EU. But, in real terms, this is the title of one region, one market. National policies remain key for each economy, but they can also play an important role for more effective implementation of regional initiatives.

Dear all,

It is high time to follow the pioneering examples of EU MS joining the green lanes initiative, make the roaming reduction between WB and EU a case in point. In these challenging times, we need your strong public support to communicate and advocate to your citizens and EU operators the win-win benefits and invite them to start the gradual reduction leading to a level close to domestic prices by 2027. We need these and many more integration measures, in energy, cyber-resilience, in tackling economic fallout from the war, etc.

Honourable Ministers,

As we look to the future with an increased sense of apprehension, the Berlin Process 2.0 is an opportunity to strengthen our determination to respond collectively and resolutely, and with operational dynamism, to the immense challenges we face together.

On our end, RCC continues to stand ready to assist the region's development, its EU perspective and security. Undoubtedly, the RCC dynamism cannot substitute the local politicians' responsibility and willingness to stand by their promises.

In the same dynamic vein, we stand ready to contribute to the operability of the Process in between Summits as well, so that the commitments are translated and followed through into operational work in a clear, structured and coherent way.