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RCC – AWARDS – PRESENTATION

RCC AWARDS EFKA HEDER AND JELICA MINIĆ

SARAJEVO, 27 February (FENA) – Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) presented the Director of South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning (SEECCEL), Efka Heder, with *Champion of Regional Cooperation* award for 2013 and acknowledged Jelica Minic for the promotion of regional cooperation.

In an interview for FENA, RCC Secretary General, Goran Svilanovic, said that Heder managed to gather women of the region and involve them in entrepreneurship, all with the aim of promoting woman's rights and better positioning in the society.

On the occasion of the sixth anniversary of the RCC, the Acknowledgment plaque was presented to Jelica Minic who was Deputy RCC Secretary General for 5 years and one of the authors of the incentive for the core RCC activity presently being implemented – preparation of South East Europe 2020 strategy, focusing on the issues of employment and economic development.

Svilanović stressed that this is the acknowledgement to persons who, over the course of the past year, did a tremendous job connecting people regardless of different obstacles – national, ethnic or religious, or that of boundaries, while led by being able to gather people around a common regional idea.

In an interview for FENA, award winners said that it was a tremendous honour to be presented the RCC award as it confirmed that they did the right thing and were on a good path of developing regional cooperation.

- This award is an acknowledgement to all forms we implement in our work, including cooperation of countries on structural partnership at the highest level, i.e. cooperation amongst governmental officials, and that amongst schools, experts, business associations working to strengthen competitiveness of SEE countries' SMEs as we all share a common goal of sustainable development - said Heder.

Thanking for the award, she stressed that SEECCEL she manages was founded upon the request of 8 SEE countries out of the need to fulfil one of the EU priorities – entrepreneurial learning which, as a part of soft *acquis*, is important for increasing competitiveness of SEE economies.

She explained that learning for entrepreneurship should be introduced in all SEE countries as a key competency given the fact that there were no postulates of economic or financial literacy in the educational system without which it would be impossible to build competitive economy in the future.

The winner of special acknowledgement, Jelica Minic, said to FENA Agency that it was good to, in this way, award those who engaged in regional cooperation, and that the acknowledgement was, at the same time, a personal satisfaction indicating that she was 'on the right track' working in the RCC.

She said that, throughout history, regional cooperation periodically proved to be the right thing inasmuch that attempts to establish regional cooperation in the given geopolitical conditions had been seen since 19

century. These attempts have been subsequently renewed with 4 regional conferences discussing all those issues which are much in focus now held from 1930 to 1933, indicating this to be an actual need of the region.

- The region cannot advance in political, security, and economic and social terms, if there is no mutual cooperation. I always believed in this and worked in line with this, for which I now feel satisfied - added Minic.

She remained that she worked as part of the team in the RCC, jointly fulfilling the mission which had been given and arose over the course of previous decades, and even centuries, and emphasizes that people in the region had understood even before that regional cooperation was very important.

- From the beginning of this century, we have been all together implementing the mission we were publicly given and which has already, in fact, been embodied throughout the continent in the very idea and practice of the EU we all aspire to – concluded Minic.

The *Champion of Regional Cooperation* has been presented for the second year in a row to an individual or an institution that the RCC Secretariat and its Secretary General consider has contributed the most to the development of regional cooperation in South East Europe over the course of the past year.

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