



**Talking points for Hido Bišćević
Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council**

**International seminar
South East Europe 20 Years On:
Transformation from State to Public Broadcasting**

Sarajevo, 14 November 2011

Your Excellency Minister Vidović,

Ms Director General of the European Broadcasting Union,

Mr Principal Advisor at the European Commission,

Mr President of the Association of Public Service Media in South East Europe,

Directors General, Assistant Minister, representatives of governments, regulators,
civil society,

Dear colleagues,

- We are honoured to welcome you to Sarajevo, to the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat, and to the **international seminar “South East Europe 20 Years On: Transformation from State to Public Broadcasting”**, we are organizing in cooperation with the European Commission’s Enlargement Directorate-General, and with support of the European Association of Public Service Media in South East Europe and the European Broadcasting Union (EBU).
- Thank you all for coming and making this event possible.
- My special thanks go to the **European Commission**, which has supported the seminar both financially and with a strong human capital presence, thus confirming its willingness to facilitate transformation in the region to stable, modern, pluralistic democracies, which fully embrace the values of the European Union.

- Consequently, this seminar has been organized in response to the European Commission's Speak Up! Conference on freedom of expression and the media, held in Brussels in May 2011, which focused very much also on the importance of the public service media.
- This event is possible thanks also to a permanent and active support of the **Association of Public Service Media in South East Europe** and the **European Broadcasting Union**, that have demonstrated genuine dedication to boosting regional cooperation among public service media.
- It is an **all-inclusive approach**, both in terms of representation from all parts of South East Europe and in terms of all relevant actors within our societies, that is crucial for success of our efforts.
- The fact that today, at the RCC Secretariat, we have **over 50 high-level officials from public service media, regulators, governments and civil society from 12 members of the RCC from South East Europe**, along with officials from relevant international organizations, gathered with a single purpose – to support independence and sustainability of public service media in the region – speaks by itself.
- It speaks that, regardless of oscillations in political and socio-economic conditions in South East Europe, the region is moving forward, both on its European integration path and in terms of regional cooperation. Moreover, the regional cooperation is entering a phase where regional ownership should become the stepping-stone towards regional responsibility for a long-lasting stability in the region.
- The membership perspective offered by the EU Enlargement Strategy 2011-2012 provides a strong incentive for all of South East Europe. It devotes significant attention to freedom of expression in the media, with a particular attention paid to a need to improve the **economic standing and autonomy of public service media** in order for them to fulfill their role.
- The RCC and its Secretariat, by pooling together entire region in practical and result oriented cooperation, have been contributing to the advancement of this perspective. We recognize the indispensable role the public service media have in promoting regional cooperation, building a free, democratic, pluralistic, tolerant and inclusive society, as well as the challenges they face in fulfilling that role. They are one of the most powerful channels for

deepening dialogue, reconciliation and building mutual confidence in South East Europe.

Ladies and gentlemen,

- South East Europe and its broadcasters have gone a long way over the past 20 years of transformation from state to public broadcasting, often under very difficult conditions. Transformation under such circumstances, and with difficult heritage of the past that has required a serious mind- and value-shift, is not easy. But, despite the difficulties, the progress is evident.
- Over the past three years of the RCC existence alone, the countries of the region have demonstrated a strong desire for regional cooperation and for a shift in focus – from animosities and misunderstandings of the past, to dialogue and overcoming of differences. This has involved various segments of the societies, public service broadcasting included.
- A year ago, **the RCC Secretariat and the EBU for the first time brought together broadcasters, government officials, regulators and experts from South East Europe to an international conference in Sarajevo.** The conference participants agreed that the region's public service media should become the engines of technological, economic, political, and cultural development of their countries, supporting integration into European and Euro-Atlantic institutions, and development of regional cooperation.
- In line with the conclusions of the last year's conference, a follow-up meeting, **in Novi Vinodolski in November 2010, established the European Association of Public Service Media in South East Europe**, as a non-profit professional body of the public service media in the region. Its establishment was supported by the RCC.
- We are glad that the Association has already taken concrete steps in this direction, illustrated most recently – on 30 September 2011, in these very premises – by the signature of a **Protocol on Regional Cooperation in Education and Training** among its 12 members. The RCC proudly facilitated this process and we look forward to the implementation of the Protocol.
- Today, we will listen with great interest your views on securing financial stability and independence of the public service media, including through solid legislative framework, market competitiveness, prevention of political interference and managerial instability, creation and maintenance of high

professional standards, as well as prevention of threat to disappearance of public service media and ways to secure their prominent place on the media market in the future, sharing issues of concern and proposals for concrete action in the future.

- On our part, we will continue working with the European Commission, the EBU and the Association in supporting a key role of public service media on the media market and in South East European societies in a long run. We also welcome the upcoming implementation of a Central European Initiative project component directed towards stimulating understanding, dialogue, reconciliation and good neighbourly relations in South East Europe through the public service media, prepared in cooperation with the RCC Secretariat.
- We look forward to continuing to work with all of you. I wish us all a successful seminar.
- Thank you for your attention.