



**Talking points of the RCC Secretary General, Goran Svilanovic, at the
Closing conference “Enhancing Growth Through Regional Action – South
East Europe 2020”
Sarajevo, 18 March 2014**

Distinguished Alternate Secretary General of CEI Ambassador Waestfelt, Austrian
Presidency of CEI Ambassador Guerer, Deputy Head of the EU Delegation Mr.
Davididi,

Respected representatives of governments from SEE and diplomatic community in
Sarajevo, European Commission, regional organizations and private sector,

Dear colleagues from CEI and RCC,

- I would like to welcome all of you at this event, which marks the end of the EU funded project “Improving Cooperation in South-East Europe by Actions for Strengthening the Regional Cooperation Council”.
- At the outset, I would also like to use this occasion and congratulate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of CEI – the oldest and one of the most prominent regional organization in Central and Eastern Europe.
- The RCC driving role and results achieved in promoting and strengthening regional cooperation, upholding an all-inclusive and regionally-owned framework, and supporting the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the RCC participants from the region has been widely recognized.
- One should only look at the progress made on the EU enlargement path. The results already gained, but also the need to address the conditions conducive to

lack of further progress, underscore the importance for the W. Balkans of EC's Enlargement Strategy 2013-2014 and Progress Reports, including EU Council's Conclusions on Enlargement and SAP. The references made in these documents to the RCC and the SEE 2020 are very encouraging for the future work of RCC.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- In the past several years, the RCC and CEI established a prolific and a partnership-based cooperation and RCC is ready to continue along the same lines.
- In this context, allow me to say few words about the Project itself.
- *Firstly*, it was a joint RCC-CEI endeavour starting from its preparatory phase, through the implementation process and today's closing conference.
- *Secondly*, it served the valuable purpose of enhancing regional cooperation in SEE and supporting the efforts of the enlargement countries from the region on their way towards EU membership.
- *Thirdly*, it gave an additional impetus to developing and strengthening of the relations and cooperation between RCC and CEI. An illustrative example is our joint work on drafting the new Memorandum of Understanding between RCC and CEI in order to reflect the new realities in our region and the new priorities of both organizations.
- Many regional events and conferences held within the Project activities like the one of Ombudsman Offices; for boosting growth of local economies and rural innovation; on creative industry; or the Workshops on Monitoring and on Regional Strategies; and others, contributed to improving regional cooperation and establishing regional stakeholder's networks in several specific sectors in SEE.
- The time frame of the Project implementation matched with some very important developments during which the RCC has evolved into a mature organization, both in terms of its expertise and capacities, though in some situations we were faced with challenges in harmonising its objectives and working packages.

- The RCC managed, inter alia, to rethink its role and the true priorities of the region. We were engaged in the elaboration of the Strategy and Work Programme covering the period 2014–2016, in which the SEE 2020 is a central pillar.
- The presence of such a distinguish audience today is an expression of support and special attention given to the regional cooperation in SEE and, in particularly to the main focus of the RCC’s engagement in the period ahead of us: the South East Europe 2020 strategy – Jobs and Prosperity in a European Perspective.
- With this in view, I wish to underline several points closely related to the items on our agenda today: SEE 2020 – Reconnecting regional with national agenda in the European perspectives, and the SEE 2020 – Platform for growth: the role of private sector and donors.
- Against the backdrop of the negative consequences of the economic and financial crisis in our region and in view of the development needs of our countries, RCC initiated and embarked in a very complex process of preparing the SEE 2020. That was a clear sign of maturity of the overall RCC capacities and its ability to recognize and pursue the shared priorities of its participants from SEE.
- As you may know, at the Ministerial meeting of SEEIC, held in Sarajevo on 21 November 2013, the ministers of the SEE 2020 beneficiaries endorsed the strategy and paved the way for undertaking the next, even more, important steps related to its implementation.
- Implementation – that is our most important and challenging task. It relates to the development of the national and regional action plans which will make possible to implement the priority actions of the Strategy, measuring progress through quantitative and qualitative indicators and monitoring the whole process. The three elements - national actions plans, regional action plan and the baseline data - will constitute the SEE 2020 Baseline report that we are preparing to produce by June this year.
- The plan is by the next RCC Annual meeting and the SEECP Summit mid-this year to have the meeting of the Governing Board of the SEE 2020 Strategy to adopt the SEE 2020 Baseline report. After this Governing Board meeting, I intend to report, to the RCC Annual meeting as well as to the SEECP Ministerial meeting, on the progress in implementing the SEE 2020.

- The SEECP high-level events will be held under the Romanian SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office in June 2014. Here, I like to underline the excellent cooperation and synergy that RCC has established with the SEECP C-i-O allowing us to ensure a functional and substantial correlation and coherence between our activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- The SEE 2020 can have a potential role in shaping the economic governance of the region as it is quickly becoming a high priority in the enlargement process.
- On the occasion of the last month meeting of the Prime-ministers of the W. Balkans organized by EBRD in London, among the other issues, the need of strengthening economic governance and using of SEE 2020 by the IFIs in their approach to the Western Balkans was emphasized.
- The seven prime ministers of the W. Balkans presented their vision for each of the economies and the region as a whole, with the regional cooperation and economic integration as integral parts.
- Finally and in the light of the EU macro-regional strategies which concerns also some of the SEE 2020 beneficiaries, I would like to stress the need to continue working towards further improving the cooperation and coordination between different regions and regional organizations in order to increase the efficiency of their work and avoid duplication of efforts.
- Let me conclude by commending the efforts of all colleagues and other stakeholders who have been engaged in different stages of the project. Certainly, particular gratitude goes to the Project manager Mr. Poli and his devoted team, to our partners from DG Enlargement and to the RCC Secretariat staff.

Thank you for your attention.