

Statement

from the Ministerial Conference of the South East Europe Investment Committee

“Sustaining Growth in SEE through Increased Competitiveness”

Bečići, 9 December 2015

Organized by the Co-Chairs of the South East Europe Investment Committee:
Government of Montenegro – Ministry of Economy and Regional Cooperation Council

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

WE, the Ministers representing the Western Balkans economies,
with the support of the Ministers of the other South East Europe Investment Committee (SEEIC) participants and other high-level officials,
on the occasion of the Ministerial Conference of the South East Europe Investment Committee (hereinafter: “SEEIC”) “Sustaining Growth in SEE through Increased Competitiveness” in Bečići on 9 December 2015, under the co-chairmanship of the Government of Montenegro – Ministry of Economy and Regional Cooperation Council (RCC),

EXPRESSING our gratitude to the Government of Montenegro and its Ministry of Economy for co-hosting this Ministerial Meeting,

RECALLING our commitment to implement and monitor the progress of the South East Europe 2020 Strategy (hereinafter: “SEE 2020” or “Strategy”), as expressed in the Statement of the SEEIC Ministerial Meeting held in Sarajevo on 21 November 2013 (Sarajevo Statement) for the achievement of the ambitious regional and economy-specific headline targets adopted at the SEEIC Ministerial Meeting in Tirana on 9 November 2012 (Tirana Statement),

BELIEVING that the principles contained in the Sarajevo and Tirana Statements remain valid, particularly the benefits of working together at the regional level in order to expedite our individual efforts to bring growth and prosperity to all our citizens,

RESTATING our commitment to further enhance regional cooperation in SEE on the basis of the principles of regional ownership, responsibility, all-inclusiveness, solidarity, and good neighbourly relations, in order to contribute to increasing the competitiveness and growth of the SEE’s industry and business,

ASSERTING our determination to continue our joint endeavours at the regional level whilst associating them with relevant components of our economy-level reform agendas, reflected in the priorities of the Economic Reform Programs (ERPs),

HAVING REGARD to relevant regional competitiveness-enhancing efforts, such as Berlin Process, including the EU macro-region strategies;

TAKING ACCOUNT of requirements of the EU accession processes in implementation of the activities stipulated under the SEE 2020 framework;

EMPHASISING the importance of fostering private-public sector dialogue in achievement of the goals of the SEE 2020;

REITERATING the regional ownership of the SEEIC embedded in the RCC Secretariat,

ACKNOWLEDGING the leading role of SEEIC as the SEE 2020 Regional Dimension Coordinator for the Strategy’s pillars of Integrated Growth (investment dimension) and Sustainable Growth (competitiveness dimension), as well as for the implementation of the SEE 2020 Flagship on Competitiveness,

BUILDING on the achievements of SEEIC structures, namely SEEIC-CEFTA Joint Working Group on Investments, Food and Beverages Expert Group, and Tourism Expert Group, reached to date in the implementation of the SEE 2020,

APPRECIATING the support and valuable contribution provided by all relevant stakeholders including administrations, representatives of the regional organizations and the international community in the work of the SEEIC,

HAVE today agreed on this Joint Statement by which we:

1. CONFIRM the integration of the SEE Investment Committee into the permanent structure of the Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat, with the full implementation of the RCC's statutory documents for all of the SEEIC participants,
2. SUSTAIN existing structures of the SEEIC on ministerial, plenary (deputy ministers), and technical (expert groups) level and ensure adequate representation with appropriate mandate of its participants,
3. PUT FORWARD establishment of new bodies of the SEEIC as per requirements of the SEE 2020 Flagship on Competitiveness,
4. AGREE to invest our best efforts in implementation of the SEE 2020 Flagship on Competitiveness, involving but not solely being limited to:
 - a. EMPLOYING appropriate core policy mix and areas of intervention envisaged for implementation of the SEE 2020 Flagship on Competitiveness,
 - b. ENHANCING the regional dialogue among the SEE economies and information exchange on economic transformation and diversification as well as on effective industrial policy design,
 - c. ASSISTING the development of SEE "economic corridors" by exploring the possibilities for establishing regional industrial clusters and creating special economic/business zones along those corridors,
 - d. ESTABLISHING a regional dialogue for development of recommendations for the investment policy reform agenda,
 - e. JOINING efforts of the region in presenting the SEE and its priority sectors as a good investment potential,
 - f. ADDING VALUE to the work of further trade facilitation efforts, particularly in the areas seeking synergies between trade policies with those of investment and industry.
 - g. ADDRESSING the main issues hindering SME and entrepreneurship development,
 - h. RESPONDING to the main barriers to development of the priority sectors and implementing the tools for overcoming those challenges,
 - i. INITIATING development of the joint regional brands/products in the priority sectors,
 - j. SUPPORTING the improvements in quality standards and development of regional value chains/supply chains in the priority sectors,

- k. ALIGNING the regional R&D and innovation priorities with those of the industrial development and priority sectors.

For successful implementation of the SEE 2020 Flagship initiatives, we further

5. CALL UPON the RCC Secretariat in conducting necessary analysis for the implementation of actions stipulated by the SEE 2020 Flagship on Competitiveness,
6. REQUEST the RCC to seek synergies and complementarities between Flagship on Competitiveness and other Flagship initiatives for successful implementation of SEE 2020 priorities,
7. PROPOSE the considerations for regional agreement on the third sector of priority,
8. RECOGNIZE the importance of better regulation for competitiveness and job creation, sustainable development and overall good governance,
9. UNDERLINE the importance of addressing the cross-cutting issues by relevant capacity building and increasing transparency
10. ENCOURAGE international and regional partner-organizations to complement their agendas with that of the SEE 2020 Flagship on Competitiveness, to facilitate a harmonized approach to the implementation of priority actions,
11. AGREE to maintain partnership among the participating economies of the SEEIC, and expanding partnerships outside borders of the SEE, particularly with the SEECF Participants and beyond,
12. INVITE the European Union for continuation of partnership in supporting the work of SEEIC within the EU enlargement process.
13. FORWARD the co-chairmanship of the SEEIC 2016 to Serbia.

ADOPTED in Bečići, Montenegro, on 9 December 2015.

Attachment:

- SEE 2020 Programming Document 2016-2018: Implementing the Strategy through Flagship Initiatives and Proposed Actions for the 2015 Annual Cycle