



**Address**  
**of the Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council**  
**Mr Hido Bišćević**

**At the meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the**  
**South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP)**

Pomorie, 21 May 2008

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased that in this beautiful town of Pomorie, which our Bulgarian friends have helped us discover, we can share a simple but fundamentally important conviction: South East Europe continues to progress.

This simple statement is even more relevant in the context of many inherited and existing complexities, and the recent and remaining concerns and challenges.

This simple statement is also a measure of many important strides contributing to the advancement of our part of Europe towards the European and Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Each of the countries is progressing individually, politically and institutionally, in the joint spirit of cooperation and mutual support. Difficult, complex, challenging and demanding as this process is, it steadily and persistently continues.

This is encouraging. And needs to be sustained and accelerated.

Because, in parts of our region we are truly standing on the threshold between the recent past and new openings. And we must redouble the efforts to continue to build upon the achievements made so far, moving the entire South East Europe forward and avoid stagnation or any strategic delay in any of its parts.

And this is why the integration into the EU and NATO does not have a viable alternative. Just as there is no alternative to dealing with the remaining outstanding issues with moderation, through nurturing of political dialogue and mutual respect. They should be tackled in the context of the long-term strategic vision for our part of Europe. We need to re-invent coexistence and learn to live with differences. Commitment to regional cooperation is fundamentally important.

Excellencies,

One year has elapsed since the Zagreb SEECP summit. Under the guidance of the Bulgarian SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office and in sustained cooperation of all the partners, we have brought the process of transition and establishing the RCC and its Secretariat to a close.

In one year we have attained full regional ownership.

I wish to thank all the SEECP countries for their reinvigorated determination to enhance cooperation in the region and support the work of the RCC.

In the process of its formation the RCC has succeeded also in profiling itself as the main interlocutor of the European Union in addressing development oriented initiatives in South East Europe.

This support has also been one of the contributors to the stability, not only of the region but also for Europe as a whole. At this point I also want to thank the European Union, Slovenian EU Presidency and officials of the European Commission for their continuing support and active engagement.

This is also the moment to pay a tribute to the indispensable role the Stability Pact has played in the promotion of stability, dialogue and tolerance in South East Europe.

As far as regional agenda and its overall mission are concerned, as the operational arm of the SEECP, the RCC will seek synergy and complementarity between all individual strategies and programmes of the governments of the SEECP Participating States, and align them with the strategy and multi-beneficiary approach of the European Commission.

The progress and dynamism we have maintained in the process of transformation of regional cooperation architecture leads me to believe that these challenging achievements can be translated into concrete and visible results to the benefit of our countries and citizens.

Finally, I submit to your attention and for your endorsement the Strategic Work Programme of the Regional Cooperation Council 2008 – 2009 as a basis for our common efforts in the period in front of us. The appointments and other relevant decisions I have taken so far are included in the Report submitted to the RCC Board.

I want to congratulate the Bulgarian colleagues for carrying out an ambitious and substantial programme, providing effective and constructive guidance for our work.

Last but not least, I would also like to wish all the best to the incoming Moldovan SEECF Chairmanship and, thanking you for kind words of support to me personally, promise that the RCC Secretariat will work hard to realize our common agenda.

Thank you.