

## Joint Declaration

### On the Establishment of the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC)

**Representatives** of the Participating States of the South East European Co-operation Process (SEECP), the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) on behalf of Kosovo in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244, the European Union (EU), represented by the Troika, consisting of the EU Presidency, the European Commission and the Council Secretariat, as well as those donor countries, international organisations and international financial institutions substantially and actively engaged in support of regional co-operation in South Eastern Europe and represented at the meeting in Sofia on 27 February 2008 (ref. Annex I)

**reaffirm** that regional co-operation is an important tool for promoting stability, security and social and economic development in South Eastern Europe and that regional co-operation processes should continue and grow to the benefit of the region;

**acknowledge** the importance of regional co-operation as a means to address the common challenges faced by the countries of South Eastern Europe and a facilitator of further European and Euro-Atlantic integration;

**recognise** the contribution to date of the international community to enhancing regional co-operation in South Eastern Europe and the continued willingness to provide political, technical and financial support;

**recognise** the positive developments in South Eastern Europe in the past decade and the valuable role and contribution of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe in fostering stability, development and co-operation in the region;

**underline** the need to safeguard the significant achievements of the Stability Pact including the instigation and development of various co-operation processes in the fields of democracy, economic development, justice and home affairs and security;

**note** the successful co-operation of the countries of the region within the framework of the SEECP and their commitment to enhance its role in regional co-operation processes;

**underline** the importance of a structure dedicated to regional co-operation in South Eastern Europe to ensure the strategic co-ordination and development of regional processes in support of the SEECP as well as in co-ordination with the EU, NATO, international donors and financial institutions;

**recall** the decisions taken by the Stability Pact's Regional Tables in Belgrade (May 2006) and Bucharest (November 2006), the SEECP Summit and the Regional Table in Zagreb (May 2007) on the transformation of the Stability Pact into more regionally owned and led co-operation framework;

**welcome** the signing of the agreement on the host country arrangements in Plovdiv on 14 September 2007, providing the legal basis for the Secretariat of the Regional Co-operation Council;

**declare** their commitment to support the newly established Regional Co-operation Council in its activities and express their common understanding that

1. the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC) is intended to sustain focused regional co-operation in South Eastern Europe through a regionally owned and led framework that also supports European and Euro-Atlantic integration;

2. the Statute of the RCC (ref. Annex II) is intended to be the foundation of its operations;

3. as specified in the RCC Statute, the RCC Board will provide operational guidance and supervision and the Board will consist of those RCC Members contributing to the budget of the RCC Secretariat as well as the EU represented by the Troika consisting of the EU Presidency, the European Commission and the Council Secretariat.

4. the RCC will function as a focal point for regional co-operation in South Eastern Europe and will provide political guidance to and receive substantive input from relevant regional task forces and initiatives active in specific thematic areas of regional co-operation;

5. the RCC, supported by the Secretary General, its Secretariat based in Sarajevo and its Liaison Office in Brussels, will provide the SEECP with operational capacities as well as act as a forum for the continued involvement of those members of the international donor community engaged in the region; and that

6. the RCC should focus its activities on the priority areas outlined in the statute – namely Economic and Social Development; Infrastructure; Justice and Home Affairs; Security Co-operation; Building Human Capital; as well as Parliamentary Co-operation as an overarching theme – and should maintain close working relations with all actors of relevance in these areas, e.g. governments, international organisations, international financial institutions, regional organisations, civil society and the private sector.

Adopted in Sofia, 27 February 2008.

## **ANNEX I – Participants of the Regional Cooperation Council**

- Albania;
- Austria;
- Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Bulgaria;
- Canada;
- Council of Europe;
- Council of Europe Development Bank;
- Croatia;
- Czech Republic;
- Denmark;
- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development;
- European Investment Bank;
- European Union (EU), represented by a High Representative of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and a representative of the European Commission;
- Federal Republic of Germany;
- Finland;
- France;
- Greece;
- Hungary;
- International Organization for Migration
- Ireland;
- Italy;
- Kosovo\*;
- Latvia;
- Moldova;
- Montenegro;
- North Atlantic Treaty Organisation;
- Norway;
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development;
- Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe;
- Poland;
- Romania;
- Serbia;
- Slovakia;
- Slovenia;
- South East European Co-operative Initiative;
- Spain;
- Sweden;
- Switzerland;
- The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
- Turkey;
- United Kingdom;
- United Nations;
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe;
- United Nations Development Programme;
- United States of America;
- World Bank.

\*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

## ANNEX II

### STATUTE OF THE REGIONAL COOPERATION COUNCIL (RCC)

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#### I. Principles, objectives and tasks of the RCC

1. The Regional Cooperation Council, as a successor of the Stability Pact, is the operational arm of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), functioning as a focal point for guiding, monitoring and supporting cooperation in South East Europe (SEE).
2. The RCC is an all-inclusive, regionally owned and led framework. This framework provides for RCC participants from the SEE, members of the international community and donors to be engaged on subjects which are important and of interest to the SEE with a view to promoting and advancing the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the region.
3. The RCC, within the framework of the general political guidelines set by the SEECP, works to develop and maintain a political climate of dialogue, reconciliation, tolerance and openness towards cooperation, with a view to enabling the implementation of programmes of regional character aimed at economic and social development to the benefit of the people in the region.
4. The RCC provides operational support to the SEECP and, in close cooperation with the SEECP Chairmanship in Office (C-i-O), assists the implementation of the SEECP C-i-O Programme and ensures its complementariness with the RCC Strategy and Work Programme.
5. The RCC works on the basis of a triennial Strategy and Work Programme and other strategic documents prepared in close cooperation with its participants from SEE, EU and international partners.
6. The RCC provides guidance to the RCC Secretariat and its Secretary General, thereby aiming at promoting and developing a focused regional cooperation in SEE.
7. The RCC, through RCC Secretary General and the RCC Secretariat, provides political guidance, supports and monitors and, where necessary, facilitates the work of relevant regional taskforces, initiatives and organizations active in specific thematic areas of regional cooperation in SEE. In particular, the RCC assists the taskforces/initiatives in gaining access to regional and international political, technical and financial support required to fulfill their objectives. The RCC establishes appropriate relationships with individual taskforces/initiatives and organizations in order to reinforce their efforts and avoid unnecessary overlapping. The RCC, in close coordination with the SEECP, streamlines regional taskforces and initiatives with the aim of achieving enhanced effectiveness, synergy and coherence.

## **II. Participants of the RCC**

8. The participants of the RCC are listed in Annex I of the Joint Declaration on the Establishment of the RCC.
9. Requests for becoming a participant of the RCC shall be submitted to the Secretary General who shall forward them without delay to the existing participants of the RCC Board for consideration. The decisions regarding the submitted requests require the consent of the participants of the RCC Board.

## **III. Areas for Cooperation in the framework of the RCC**

10. Areas for cooperation in the framework of the RCC are as follows:
  - a. Economic and Social Development
  - b. Energy and Infrastructure
  - c. Justice and Home Affairs
  - d. Security Cooperation
  - e. Building Human Capital
11. In addition to these areas of cooperation, parliamentary cooperation, media development, gender mainstreaming and involvement of civil society as overarching themes will continue playing role in achieving the RCC mission.
12. The RCC will prioritize its activities through a triennial Strategy and Work Programme of the RCC, the South East Europe 2020 Strategy and other strategic documents in the areas of cooperation and in light of the developments in the region.

## **IV. Coordination between RCC and SEECP**

13. In view of the strategic character of the relations between the SEECP and the RCC, coordination meetings between the SEECP Troika, the RCC Secretariat and the European Union (EU) are taking place back-to-back with the meetings of the RCC Board. The Coordination meetings are co-chaired by the Secretary General and the SEECP C-i-O and are convened with the purpose of discussing and reviewing the developments within regional cooperation in SEE, and harmonizing the priorities of the country holding the SEECP C-i-O with the Strategy and Work Programme of the RCC.

## **V. Structures of the RCC**

14. Annual Meeting of the RCC
  - a. The Annual Meeting is held back to back with the SEECP Summit. The Annual Meeting is hosted by the SEECP C-i-O and prepared by the Secretary General in coordination with the SEECP C-i-O. It is co-chaired by the Secretary General and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the SEECP C-i-O. The Annual Meeting is held at the level of Senior Civil Servants or above.

- b. The Annual meeting ensures the strategic coordination and development of the regional cooperation processes, reviews and endorses the Secretary General's Annual Report on regional cooperation in SEE as well as the triennial Strategy and Work Programme of the RCC.
- c. The Annual meeting takes note of the RCC Board's endorsement of the nomination proposal of the candidate for the position of the Secretary General of the RCC
- d. The Annual Meeting is open to other countries, international organizations and partners as guests upon request and/or the initiative of the Secretary General in consultations with the SEEC C-i-O and following the consent of the Board.

#### 15. Board of the RCC

- a. The Board consists of those participants of the RCC contributing to the budget of the Secretariat of the RCC.
- b. The Board provides operational guidance to and supervision of the RCC, accepts the Annual Report and the regular reports of the Secretary General, adopts the triennial Strategy and Work Programme of the RCC and supports the Secretary General in its implementation and reviews progress in the course of the year, adopts and amends the Statute of the RCC (Annex I) and the List of participants to the RCC (Annex II) of the Joint Declaration on the Establishment of RCC as well as adopts decisions pertinent to the activities of the Secretariat of the RCC and oversees their implementation.
- c. The Board considers and endorses the nomination proposal of the candidate for the position of the Secretary General of the RCC.
- d. The Board, upon recommendation of the Secretary General and in accordance with the political guidelines of the SEEC Summit, can decide to adjust/adapt the areas for cooperation in the framework of the RCC.
- e. The Board holds three regular meetings a year and is chaired by the Secretary General. The Board meetings are convened and prepared by the Secretary General in coordination with the SEEC C-i-O. The Board meets at the level of RCC National Coordinators, which are Senior Civil Servants in each participant of the Board responsible for coordination of the RCC relevant issues within their respective administrations.
- f. Decisions of the Board are taken by consensus, which is understood as absence of objection.

#### 16. Secretary General of the RCC

- a. Promotes and facilitates the achievement of the RCC objectives and tasks, in particular to foster regional cooperation through intensive communication with all stakeholders in SEE region and beyond, with the EU institutions and international partners, in order to initiate and support regional co-operation activities and initiatives in SEE and to facilitate European and Euro-Atlantic integration. Secretary General takes into consideration SEEC political guidelines while conducting the duties described above.

- b. Chairs the Board meetings and co-chairs the Annual meeting with the SEECP C-i-O Minister of Foreign Affairs.
- c. Heads the Secretariat of the RCC, having executive authority over staff operations, personnel recruitment and management.
- d. Provides support to the SEECP and its C-i-O through the work of the Secretariat of the RCC, including by preparing meetings and conferences.
- e. Represents the RCC and actively takes part in meetings of the SEECP at all levels and presents the most important current and future activities of the RCC.
- f. Represents the RCC and actively takes part in other high-level international and regional conferences, events, meetings of relevance and importance for SEE.
- g. Submits the Annual Report on regional cooperation in SEE and the triennial RCC Strategy and Work Programme to the Board, Annual meeting and to the SEECP Summit for review and endorsement.
- h. Presents the strategic aspects of the Annual Report to the SEECP Summit thus contributing to the elaboration of the political guidelines of the SEECP.
- i. Cooperates closely with all institutions of the EU and its Member States in order to support the EU integration process of SEE and to contribute to the complementariness of regional cooperation activities with the EU integration process.
- j. Works closely with other international institutions and organizations, including international financial institutions, and the private sector in promoting regional co-operation in SEE, and supports the involvement of civil society actors in regional co-operation processes.
- k. Ensures that the RCC focuses on the areas for regional cooperation, as outlined in Heading III of this Statute
- l. Designates, following consultations with the participants of the Board, the Deputy Secretary General to act on his behalf, as necessary, from among the officials of the Secretariat of the RCC.
- m. Ensures and is responsible for appropriate use of the budget of the Secretariat in accordance with the administrative and financial management procedures governing the budget of the Secretariat, including an independent audit, as outlined in the Financial Management Manual approved by the Board of the RCC.
- n. Facilitates efforts to secure funding for regional cooperation activities under the auspices of the RCC.
- o. Signs Memoranda of understanding and similar documents on cooperation between RCC and third parties upon consent of the RCC Board

## 17. Secretariat of the RCC

- a. The Secretariat is located in Sarajevo and is headed by the Secretary General.
- b. The Secretariat provides technical, organizational and analytical support to the Secretary General, to the Annual Meeting and the Board as well as operational support, if required, in preparing SEECP Ministerial meetings and SEECP Summits. It provides a coordination framework for regional cooperation activities within SEE and acts as an information and focal point for such activities.
- c. The staff of the Secretariat of the RCC is recruited on a competitive basis in accordance with the required competencies, while taking into account gender and geographical balance as appropriate. The Secretariat's staff is contracted and paid from the budget of the Secretariat. All staff members shall be considered as international civil servants owing their loyalty to RCC. If in a particular situation it is more favourable for the staff member or selected candidate to be seconded by country of his/her origin, the Secretariat may accommodate the interest expressed by the candidate and his/her country.
- d. In order to increase its expertise, RCC Secretariat may request from RCC Participants to second respective consultant for limited period of time or specific assignment.

## 18. Liaison Office of the Secretariat of the RCC

- a. The Secretariat has a Liaison Office located in Brussels that is directed by the Head of Liaison of Office.
- b. The Liaison Office develops and maintains close relationships with European and Euro-Atlantic institutions in order to support the Secretariat in achieving its tasks.

## **VI. Selection and appointment of the Secretary General of the RCC**

19. The Secretary General shall be a strong political figure from the region, with the high ability to interact with the Governments from the region, international partners and institutions and shall have a record of successful engagement in regional cooperation.
  - a. The SEECP C-i-O shall, at the beginning of January of the year when the mandate of the Secretary General is expiring, announce the vacancy of the position to all SEECP Participating States and shall invite each of them to propose one suitable candidate for the position of the Secretary General.
  - b. The proposals of the candidates for the position of the Secretary General shall be submitted to the SEECP C-i-O by the end of January of the year when the mandate of the Secretary General is expiring.
  - c. The SEECP C-i-O shall inform all SEECP Participating States about the received candidacies and shall consult the Board on the occasion of its first meeting of the year when the mandate of the Secretary General is expiring.



- d. The SEECP C-i-O shall conclude the process of consultations regarding the candidates for the position of the Secretary General within the SEECP Participating States in a notified and transparent procedure by the end of March of the year when the mandate of the Secretary General is expiring and submit a shortlist of best suited candidates to the Committee of Political Directors of the SEECP and the Board.
- e. The Committee of Political Directors of the SEECP shall make a nomination proposal of the candidate for the position of the Secretary General, taking into account the results of consultations and, if deems appropriate, invite the candidates to present a short vision of the future work of the RCC, no later than six (6) weeks before the SEECP Summit to be held in the year when the mandate of the Secretary General is expiring.
- f. The SEECP C-i-O shall, through the Secretariat of the RCC, submit the nomination proposal of the candidate for the position of the Secretary General to the Board for consideration and endorsement. Prior to the meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the SEECP Summit, the Annual Meeting of the RCC takes note of the endorsed nomination proposal.
- g. The SEECP Ministers of Foreign Affairs, following the endorsement of the nomination proposal of the candidate for the position of the Secretary General, shall appoint the Secretary General.
- h. The SEECP Summit shall approve the appointment of the Secretary General.
- i. In case there is no agreement on the selection and appointment of the Secretary General at the SEECP Summit, the outgoing Secretary General shall continue to perform her/his duties on exceptional basis until the appointment of a new Secretary General. The SEECP C-i-O shall, in consultations with the other SEECP Participating States and the Board, undertake an urgent procedure for selecting and appointing of the Secretary General and, if deems appropriate, the decision on the appointment of the Secretary General could be adopted through written procedure.

## **VII. Duration of the mandate of the Secretary General of the RCC**

20. The Secretary General is appointed for three (3) years with the option of one-time renewal of the term in office as the Secretary General up to three (3) years.
21. Upon request of at least two SEECP Participating States submitted to the SEECP C-i-O, a procedure for the dismissal of the Secretary General can be launched. The SEECP C-i-O shall without delay inform all SEECP Participating States and the Board about the request and make urgent consultations. In case of consensus minus one of all SEECP Participating States, the SEECP C-i-O shall, through written procedure, officially announce the discontinuation of the mandate of the Secretary General.
22. In case of discontinuation of the mandate of Secretary General due to incapacity, resignation or dismissal, the Deputy Secretary General shall automatically assume all duties as the acting Secretary General. The SEECP C-i-O shall, in consultations with the other SEECP Participating States and the Board, undertake an urgent procedure for selecting and appointing of the Secretary General and, if deems appropriate, the

decision on the appointment of the Secretary General could be adopted through written procedure.

### **VIII. Financing**

23. The annual budget of the Secretariat consists of financial contributions from the participants of the Board from SEE, from the European Commission and other participants of the Board.
24. Financial contributions of the participants of the Board from SEE are regulated separately.
25. The financial contribution of the European Commission is regulated separately.
26. The financial contribution of other participants of the Board shall not be less than 50.000 Euro per year.
27. The participants of the Board should make their financial contributions to the budget of the Secretariat available no later than 30<sup>th</sup> June in each subsequent year thereafter, following the receipt of a written request from the Secretary General in accordance with the Financial Management Manual. Exceptions can be negotiated by written agreement between the Secretary General and concerned participants of the Board following the consent of the Board.

### **IX. Flag and Language**

28. The RCC flag represents a white field with the official logo in the middle. The working language of the RCC is English. All official documents and other materials shall be produced in this language.

Sarajevo, 25 April 2013