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**ASSIGNMENT OF 2012 'SLOBODA' (FREEDOM) AWARD OF THE
INTERNATIONAL PEACE CENTRE SARAJEVO TO THE REGIONAL
COOPERATION COUNCIL**

**SPEECH BY MS JELICA MINIC, ON BEHALF OF THE SECRETARY
GENERAL OF THE REGIONAL COOPERATION COUNCIL**

Sarajevo, 7 February 2013

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to use this opportunity to address the esteemed audience and thank you very much for your confidence, primarily Mr. Ibrahim Spahic, academic Tvrtko Kulenovic, and the Committee for Assignment of Awards of the International Peace Centre Sarajevo.

Thank you for giving me the honour to receive this award on behalf of the Regional Council, which is traditionally assigned on the occasion of 10 December – International Human Rights Day, for contribution to humanism, fight for human rights and freedom in BiH, Europe and the world, all the more because this is the first award received by the Regional Cooperation council in its five-year history.

This award is a sign that our efforts and hard work on different activities with countries of the South East Europe aimed at improvement of regional cooperation did not remain unnoticed, in shadow.

I will use this opportunity to reflect on fields that always come last when strategic goals and comparative advantages of our region are mentioned: culture, education, science, innovations... Today, I am proud because I can share with you the joy related to a special project and concrete product of regional cooperation between countries of the South East Europe. It is a production of a CD *Les Fammes des Balkans* – a compilation of 14 traditional songs from all countries in the region, performed by female artists that many of you know

well, such as Esma Redzepova, Biljana Krstic, Amira Medunjanin, Tamara Obrovac and others.

I sincerely hope that this CD will contribute to positive branding of South East Europe and give a significant contribution to creative industries in the region.

I would also like to point out that the Regional Cooperation Council made a big step forward in other fields as well, such as education, through coordination of structured reforms of university systems at the Western Balkans and region's approximation to the European university space. Our plan is to improve cooperation between universities on PhD studies in the forthcoming period, to promote exchange of prospective PhD holders, develop a network for mutual recognition of masters and PhD degrees and encourage joint applications of universities in the region for European funds.

The foreseen establishment of Regional Research Platform will facilitate coordination of donor activities, improve efficiency and management in the fields of research and innovations, accelerate forming of regional excellence centres and connect regional scientists with their numerous colleagues in Diaspora. We believe that our efforts will enable at least a part of young professors and scientists to stay in countries of our region.

The Regional Cooperation Council made significant steps in the field of culture, as one of the most important fields to me personally and to my colleagues from the Building Human Capital Unit, and certainly the favourite area of cooperation.

During the implementation of our 2011-2013 Strategy, we initiated new business models for culture and creative industries, expanding the traditional role of cultural institutions in providing access to cultural contents, while using cultural heritage for the purpose of economic development and preserving it for future generations. We applied such approach in the implementation of the second stage of Ljubljana Process, a project aiming at renewal i.e. restoration of culture monuments in the South East Europe. Our Task Force on Culture and Society, which includes representatives of relevant institutions of countries from the region and prominent international organisations in the field of culture, also develops other cooperation projects, significant for strengthening of mutual trust and exchange of cultural and artistic, i.e. general human values.

RCC and our group of cultural officers (TFCS) was given a mandate by SEE ministers of culture to establish a museum network in this part of Europe, in order to strengthen our museums and their extremely important educational,

social and economic roles in our societies. We will continue fulfilling this mission with pleasure, with our friends and partners from the region and wider.

RCC also coordinates activities aimed at enhancement of regional cooperation in the movie industry. The emerging Regional Movie Fund will build on the existing state-level and European funds, in order to strengthen the cross-border market for audio-visual products in SEE. In this way, we want to channel public financing of independent movie projects through a system that will enable generating of further investments, strengthening of the movie industry and providing its sustainability.

Finally, RCC and its civil society partners will provide for continued development of Common History Books, drafted on the basis of a multi-disciplinary and joint approach in studying our region's history, strengthening at the same time democratic values and the sense of inevitability of coexistence, especially of future generations.

Thank you for your attention and for this beautiful award.