



**Address by Deputy Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)  
and Head of Expert Pool, Jelica Minic,**

**at the Meeting of the Steering Group on Regional Strategy (SGRS)  
and  
Annual Coordination Conference of the Regional Organizations and International  
Partners in the area of Justice Home Affairs and Security Cooperation**

1-2 December 2011, Belgrade, Serbia

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to welcome you all at this important event.

Today's meeting continues the efforts initiated in 2008 for the coordination and the strategic integration of the RCC's activities in justice and home affairs area with the programs and strategies aimed at EU enlargement and enhanced cooperation in the SEE Region.

This Steering Group meeting marks a milestone in the implementation of the two regional policy instruments on in justice and home affairs, respectively, the RCC Strategy and Work Programme endorsed in 2010 through the Declaration of the SEECP Heads of State and Government in Istanbul and the Regional Strategy Document (RSD) endorsed through the Joint Declaration of Justice and interior Ministers of SEECP Member States on 18 March 2011 Budva, Montenegro.

In compliance with the EU 2011-2012 Enlargement Strategy, the Regional Strategic Document focuses on combating organized crime, fighting corruption and bringing sustained improvements to the rule of law. Strengthening the judicial and prosecutorial cooperation in civil and criminal matters, consolidating the existing regional judicial and law enforcement cooperation mechanisms, enhancing mutual legal assistance are main region's strategic goals.

In this time of crisis many efforts to improve institutions and economy has been endangered by the level of corruption, organized crime and the erosion of the governance. There is a scant progress in the region in strengthening the rule of law and governance, in controlling corruption and improving institutional quality, although there are some variances across countries. These negative phenomena alters public trust in the political class, government authorities, justice and it also affect the private sector and regional economies, undermining level of investments that is necessary to push developments forward.

Thus the fact that there is a strong regional dimension in bringing sustained improvements to the rule of law, combating criminality and corruption create the premises to overcome the difficulties ahead of us. In this respect the activities of the RCC and Regional Organizations are very dynamic. RCC is supporting Regional Organizations in focusing on sharing good practices, assessing the level of regional cooperation, identifying gaps and needs, ensuring coordination with other operative bodies or networks.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me now to focus on the relevance of the Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism.

Acting within the mandate established in the COMMON DECLARATION OF SEECP MINISTERS OF JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS *“Regarding the endorsement of the Regional Strategic Document 2011-2013 and the Action Plan for its implementation”* adopted in Budva, on 18 March 2011 we have embarked on the preparation and drafting of the Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism to assess the level of regional cooperation within justice and home affairs area.

The first phase of this process has been completed in July 2011, with the first meeting of the Steering Group on Regional Strategy (SGRS) on justice and home affairs (JHA) held in Sarajevo back to back with the meeting of the IPA Multi Beneficiary Strategy Working Group on Justice and Home Affairs. In the conclusions adopted on this occasion the participants appreciated the proposed Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism as a good basis and that further work is needed to simplify existing proposal and to adjust it to the current capacities.

During September and November 2011 the first versions of the Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism have been further improved through written communication circulated between RCC Secretariat and RCC Members from SEE regional and international organisations.

These 2 days, under the RCC Secretariat organization the Steering Group has the important tasks to adopt the monitoring mechanism and to start for the first time the analytical and reporting activities. In this pilot endeavour the Steering Group is not acting alone. European Commission and UNODC are encouraging and strongly support the regional monitoring mechanism, looking forward to its results.

This jointly implementation of the regional mechanism and evaluation platforms enables us to deal effectively with the immense challenges in these important areas and will certainly contribute to the security and stability of our region, to the better life of our citizens and, last but not least, to the advancement of all of our countries on the path towards the European and Euro-Atlantic integrations.

Thank you for your attention and I wish you all success in continuation of our common constructive efforts.