



Overview of the Key Activities of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat

January 2009

I.

RCC Secretary General asks the Russian Federation and Ukrainian Prime Ministers to take steps to resume gas supply to South East Europe (SEE)

The RCC Secretary General responded to the severe natural gas supply crisis in Europe, which erupted as the year 2009 began, by sending letters separately on 8 January 2009 to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation and Prime Minister Yulia Timoshenko of Ukraine.

In the letters, the Secretary General conveyed the gravest concerns regarding humanitarian situation in many SEE countries as living conditions worsened, due to the fact that SEE countries currently have no alternative to their reliance on imported gas and moreover reflected his anxiety on the negative effects of such gas cuts on economic activities which could have additional repercussions on overall social situation and stability.

The Secretary General urged that all necessary measures be taken for the reestablishment of the natural gas supply to SEE, proposing an exemption to SEE from the consequences of the conflict until the settlement of the issue through a tripartite format with the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the EU Commission is found.

II.

RCC Secretariat participates in the IPA Multi-Beneficiary Programme Coordination Meeting, 15-16 January 2009, Brussels

The RCC Secretariat was represented at the above-mentioned Meeting by the Deputy Secretary General/Head of Expert Pool, accompanied by the staff of the Brussels Liaison Office and the RCC experts. Among other issues a Crisis Response Package Measures designed as an IPA response to the financial and economic crisis was presented by the European Commission.

The RCC Deputy Secretary General/Head of Expert Pool presented the results of the RCC activities since its establishment, as well as the risks and the divergencies between successful sectoral cooperation in the region and the unstable bilateral political relations.

III.

RCC Secretariat presents its mission, priorities and activities to the Bosnia and Herzegovinian officials

The experts of the RCC Secretariat, within the context of the process of networking between the RCC members from SEE and the Secretariat, being carried out with the aim of bringing the RCC work closer to a wider circle of government officials, business sector, civil society and the media, presented in detail its mission, priorities and activities to the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina on 20 January 2009 in Sarajevo. The participants were welcomed by the RCC Secretary General, with introductory remarks by Bosnia and Herzegovina's RCC National Coordinator Ambassador Dragan Bozanic and the RCC Deputy Secretary General/Head of Expert Pool Jelica Minic.

So far, presentations have been made in Chisinau, Sofia, Belgrade, Podgorica, Zagreb, Athens and Ankara in 2008 and in Sarajevo in 2009 Sarajevo.

IV.

The Secretary General holds separate talks with the Prime Ministers of the two entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the second week of January 2009.

The Secretary General, when meeting separately with the Republika Srpska Prime Minister Milorad Dodik and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina Prime Minister Nedžad Branković, conveyed his expectations of an active role of Bosnia and Herzegovina's entities in preparing projects of strategic importance as the proposals of

the Council of Ministers of the country, in the process of the realization of the EU's Multi-Beneficiary Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (MB IPA) Strategy.

The Secretary General, pointing out at the opportunities which the MB IPA provides for the use of EU funds, stated that a lasting political stability and self-sustainability of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole is crucial if it is seeking to take full advantage of the large development possibilities being offered through the MB IPA.

V.

Briefing for the EU Council Working Group on Western Balkans – COWEB

Briefing was given to COWEB in Brussels on 22 January 2009 by the RCC Deputy Secretary General/Head of Expert Pool and the Head of the RCC Brussels Liaison Office. The COWEB was presented with the summary of the RCC activities in 2008, their assessment from the perspective of regional cooperation and the plans envisaged for the future, also given information about the framework within which the RCC activities are advancing forward.

VI.

The Secretary General attends the Informal Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the South East European Cooperation (SEECF) Process

The RCC was represented at the above-mentioned Meeting, held in Chisinau on 30 January 2009, by the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary General/Head of Expert Pool.

The Participants at the Meeting, in summary, commended the activities of the RCC for developing concrete and targeted projects and stated that the SEECF should provide constant support to the RCC in attaining its goals.

The RCC Secretary General, in his statement at the Meeting, referred to the development of ever closer ties between the SEE countries and the EU, mentioning the advances made in terms of the progress witnessed in the accession negotiations, as well as the establishment of the Stabilization and Association relationships between other SEE countries and the EU.

Saying that all these add up to the factors strategically changing the SEE landscape, the Secretary General stressed the need for extra investments by the RCC members from the SEE in developing project ideas and in their programming, in cooperation with the RCC Secretariat and the experts from the EU Commission.

In the margins of the Meeting, the Secretary General held several bilateral meetings. The Secretary General also held talks with the Deputy Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of Moldova, during which the negative effects of the global economic crisis and the recent gas supply cut-offs on the SEE was a main topic and within this context, the Secretary General underlined the importance of solidarity and enhanced coordination among the SEE countries in order to be able to tackle common problems.

Sarajevo, 12 February 2009