



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

May 2009

1

Croatian President Stjepan Mesić visited the RCC Secretariat in Sarajevo on 4 May 2009

President Mesić underlined Croatia's support to regional cooperation processes highlighting their importance for the overall development of South East Europe and advancement on the path to the European and Euro-Atlantic integrations. In this light, he expressed full support to the mandate and work of the RCC. Secretary General Bišćević thanked President Mesić for support, stressing the RCC would do its utmost to contribute to regional development. During the stay at the RCC premises, President Mesić met with the Secretariat's staff, diplomatic representatives of the Participating States of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) accredited to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina as the RCC Secretariat's host country and media representatives.

2

RCC Secretariat and Central European Initiative (CEI) - Executive Secretariat signed Memorandum of Understanding in Sarajevo on 12 May 2009

Secretary General of the RCC Hido Bišćević and Secretary General of the CEI - Executive Secretariat Ambassador Pietro Ercole Ago, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that formalized cooperation and provided a general framework for enhancing project-oriented cooperation between the RCC Secretariat and the CEI-ES on issues of interest for South East Europe, transfer of know-how, seminars and training courses. The MoU will enable the RCC Secretariat and the CEI-Executive Secretariat to carry out jointly a number of activities taking advantage of available funds and expertise as well as assuring the best use of the existing cooperative network.

3

RCC Board held its regular quarterly meeting in Sarajevo on 14 May 2009

Secretary General Bišćević presented to the Members of the RCC Board the 2008-2009 Annual Report of the RCC Secretary General on Regional Cooperation in South East Europe, the Strategic Work Program of the RCC for the period 2009-2010 as well as his regular quarterly report on the activities of the RCC Secretariat. While presenting the documents, Secretary General Bišćević stressed that the RCC managed to focus activities on initiating, developing and facilitating concrete projects against the challenging background of political situation in the region, adverse effects of the current economic and financial crisis, the natural gas supplies shortages and other impeding challenges. In line with the RCC statutory provisions, the RCC Board accepted the Annual Report and adopted the Strategic Work Program 2009-2010, to be reviewed and endorsed by the RCC Annual Meeting on 4 June 2009 in Chisinau.

4

RCC Secretariat's experts held a presentation in Pristina on 18 May 2009

Experts from the RCC Secretariat lead by Jelica Minić, Deputy Secretary General/Head of Expert Pool held a presentation of the RCC priorities and activities in Pristina. The presentation was an excellent opportunity to overview the results achieved in the first year of activities of the RCC Secretariat and discuss plans for the future in light of the adoption of the RCC Strategic Work Program 2009-2010. The discussion that followed demonstrated clear interest for participation in the RCC projects and activities aiming at boosting economic and social development of all RCC members from South East Europe.

5

RCC Secretary General met High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union (EU) in Sarajevo on 19 May 2009

The High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU Javier Solana met with RCC Secretary General Hido Bišćević on the occasion of his visit to Sarajevo and reiterated EU support to RCC activities. High Representative Solana underlined the significance of the RCC mandate at the regional level coupled with the efforts at the national level in implementing the reforms on the path to the EU. Secretary General Bišćević informed the EU High Representative on the first year of RCC operation and thanked for the support provided by the EU in the context of the RCC activities aiming at promoting the spirit of cooperation and mutual respect as well as facilitating development projects in the region.

6

RCC Secretariat hosted an International Workshop on Integrated Transboundary Water Resources Management in South East Europe in Sarajevo on 18 to 20 May 2009

Participants of the International Workshop, co-organized by the RCC Secretariat and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE), with the strong support of the Global Water Partnership Mediterranean and the International Sava River Basin Commission, concluded that cooperation on shared water resources management is a crucial component of stability and prosperity in South East Europe. Several project ideas were presented at the workshop and discussed with a variety of stakeholders from the region, with a major focus on the development of the Water and Climate Adaptation Plan for South East Europe. The participants highlighted achievements and identified the most urgent actions to prevent, control and reduce negative transboundary impacts on human health, safety, nature and socio-economic conditions aiming to prepare for the second Assessment of Transboundary Waters under the UN ECE Water Convention, which is to take place in November 2009 in Geneva, and for the next Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”, to be held in Astana, Kazakhstan in 2011.

7

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and RCC Secretariat signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Vienna on 21 May 2009

The MoU between the UNODC and the RCC Secretariat forms the basis for technical assistance to strengthen national administrative and institutional capacities, develop legislation and policies, and implement UN and EU standards and principles. The sharing of knowledge and best practices will also be facilitated. The aim is to strengthen national criminal justice systems and the protection of human rights, while promoting the independence and integrity of institutions by tackling corruption. Efforts will be made to address money laundering and the financing of terrorism as well as asset recovery. Support will be given to the prevention and treatment of drug-related problems, including the spread of HIV/AIDS.

8

Regional Defence Policy Directors met in Sofia on 22 May 2009

Participants of the meeting, co-organized by the Bulgarian Ministry of Defence and the RCC Secretariat, stressed the importance of multinational cooperation and discussed ways to enhance regional defense and security cooperation by joining efforts to face common security challenges such as the world financial crisis. They also emphasized the importance of consolidating trust, proposing new initiatives and formulating techniques to improve the region-wide transnational defence cooperation framework.

9

Secretary General Hido Bišćević met with Pierre Mirel, Director in the Directorate General for Enlargement of the European Commission in Brussels on 25 May 2009

Secretary General Bišćević informed Director Mirel on the state of play regarding preparations for the RCC Annual Meeting (Chisinau, 4 June 2009). The meeting also focused on the

continuation of development of cooperation between the RCC and the European Commission, in particular in the context of the implementation of the Strategic Work Programme of the RCC for the period 2009-2010. In light of the preparations for the RCC Annual Meeting in Chisinau, emphasis was put on the efforts to ensure inclusiveness of regional cooperation activities within the RCC framework.

10

Deputy Secretary General/Head of Expert Pool Jelica Minić held a briefing for the EU Council Working Group on Western Balkans (COWEB) in Brussels on 28 May 2009

On the occasion of the briefing Deputy Secretary General/Head of Expert Pool presented the activities of the RCC and main results achieved in the course of the first year of the operation of the RCC. In presentation special emphasis was put on efforts at the regional level aimed at countering adverse effects of economic and financial crisis. Information was also provided regarding plans for future activities and work of the RCC, in particular in the context of the implementation of the Strategic Work Programme of the RCC for the period 2009-2010. EU members generally positively assessed achieved results of regional cooperation within the RCC framework and stressed the necessity of further prioritization of the RCC activities within five broader priority areas.

11

Secretary General Bišćević met with Timo Summa, Director in the Directorate General for Enlargement of the European Commission in Sarajevo on 29 May 2009

Cooperation between the RCC and the European Commission was positively evaluated and the possibilities for future role of the RCC within the EU Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) Multi-beneficiary Programme were further elaborated. Participants stressed the importance of the preparations for the Conference on Western Balkans scheduled for 9 December 2009 in Brussels, organized by the incoming Swedish Presidency of the EU Council and the European Commission, with the active participation of the RCC, which will focus on impact of financial crisis on the region, on the progress of the enlargement process as well as on regional cooperation. In light of the preparations for the RCC Annual Meeting in Chisinau, emphasis was put on the efforts to ensure inclusiveness of regional cooperation activities within the RCC framework. Secretary General Bišćević and Director Summa also touched upon the possible modalities for involvement of the European Commission in the RCC activities and financial framework beyond 2010.

Sarajevo, 10 June 2009