



**TALKING POINTS OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE
REGIONAL COOPERATION COUNCIL (RCC),**

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**MEETING OF THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE
CENTRAL EUROPEAN INITIATIVE
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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Ministers, Dear colleagues,

- Allow me to start by thanking our hosts, the Serbian Presidency of the Central European Initiative, for the organization of this extremely important event and for the kind invitation to address today's plenary session.
- As our experience shows, the two levels of cooperation: among countries within various regional fora and between regional organizations/initiatives, proved to be a highly important exercise for the development of common objectives, oversee that these dovetail with the interests of the participating states and ensure an effective implementation of their concrete projects and programmes.
- In my opinion, these two dimensions of cooperation are conducive to ensuring and sustaining a lasting progress in the overall economic, social and political realm.
- Sometimes this process is hampered by *forces* difficult to control – as it was the case over a year ago when we have witnessed the outset of a deep economic and financial crisis. It may appear difficult to speak of progress in these instances, especially when the consequences still reverberate throughout the countries from the region and well beyond.

- However, one should not succumb to an overly gloomy picture. Over this period, I dare to say that we nevertheless made important steps forward, first and foremost by developing a better understanding of the challenges and possible solutions. This positive platform becomes conducive to ensuring a lasting progress.
- As it is evidenced by the recent trends in the region, progress is conditioned largely by notions of rapprochement, pragmatism and moderation. Further embedding these trends in regional cooperation will ensure the climate needed for alleviating economic and social problems and will pave the way for concrete regional projects and initiatives, to the benefit of each and every country.
- This approach, in my mind, can only be complementary to the EU and/or Euro-Atlantic perspectives of the countries from the region.
- The developments are encouraging, both on part of the countries from the region and the EU. The forthcoming completion of negotiations with one of the RCC/CEI members will provide additional impetus to the others and I do believe that this autumn may bring new positive decisions, thus keeping the enlargement on a positive track.
- On the other side, in order to remain firmly on this path, these developments need to be translated into durable and sustainable policies.
- The concerns over the remaining unresolved issues persist, even to a greater extent than several months ago and they inevitably also influence the „energy” for regional cooperation.
- The effects of the economic crisis are very much with the region – recovery requires a more vigorous approach. Conversely, with a slow revival it may well take a prolonged period for many of our countries to revive their economies.
- In the light of such a general picture, the RCC will continue to pursue regional cooperation relying on the stimulating effects of the EU

enlargement conditions and by pooling the regional stakeholders around a network of concrete projects in all priority areas and other fields.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- The Annual Meeting of the RCC to be held in more than two weeks from now, as well as the Meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Summit of the SEECP Heads of State and Government, will be a valuable platform to take stock of the achieved results and discuss the prospects for further enhancement of the regional cooperation.
- However, I would like to use this opportunity and reflect on several important results attained in the regional cooperation over the last period.
- We have succeeded to deliver the much needed synergy between the current Montenegrin and upcoming Serbian C-i-O of the SEECP and the RCC. Moreover, by now we have a fully operational mechanism of regular coordination between the SEECP Troika, the RCC and the EU, which above all, I consider essential for enhancing regional ownership of cooperation, alongside with the EU enlargement policy.
- Profiled by now as a key forum for guiding and monitoring cooperation in the region, the RCC started vigorously to implement its Strategy and Work Programme for 2011-2013.
- Several important developments occurred that have the potential to shape the regional cooperation landscape in the medium term. The Europe 2020 strategy of the European Union has inspired attempts to emulate its policy goals and targets in the SEE region. RCC has already undertaken activities to use this strategic framework and assist regional initiatives in SEE to associate them with the Europe 2020 strategy. Here, I need to stress the results of the RCC organized conference in Brussels, „Western Balkans and Europe 2020“, which provided us with the strategic opening to embark on the conceptual elaboration of how the RCC could assist in ensuring convergence, along the strategic goals of Europe 2020.

- In addition, I would like to emphasize few other very valuable results such as the Regional Strategic Document and Action Plan on Justice and Home Affairs, endorsed recently by the SEECP Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs; establishment of the RCC Task Force on Culture and Society; the taking over from the OECD the SEE Investment Committee; enhancing cooperation in the field of transport; strengthening cooperation in the field of security and many more.
- We have also concentrated our activities on the infrastructural revival of the region where further advancement will require support and engagement of the countries from the region together with the regional stakeholders involved. The RCC intends to raise the awareness of the key role of transportation reforms, reconstruction and development in South East Europe and, in particular, to obtain appropriate political support at the incoming SEECP Summit in Montenegro.
- As these and many other examples of concrete results indicate, the regional platform is a very important mechanism, in which dialogue and cooperation are mutually inclusive in converting ideas into pragmatic results.
- This is certainly a painstaking work, meaning that successes are not registered overnight. It requires an amalgam of positive trends, such as moderation, pragmatism, all-inclusiveness with the determination of the countries from the region to engage in large-scale projects that would address the needs at all levels.
- We all know that common areas of work represent a vital-stepping stone for initiating and sustaining a constructive cooperation and dialogue. The Memorandum of Understanding between the RCC and the Executive Secretariat of CEI laid out the platform on the basis of which our two organizations are fruitfully cooperating. A tangible result is the Sustainable Energy Development Regional Initiative (SEDRI), whose goals are to promote the construction of small scale sustainable energy facilities in each of the interested members from SEE and Eastern Europe; improvement of

legislative, institutional and regulatory frameworks conducive to the development of sustainable regional energy sector and many more.

- I am very encouraged by a continuous and result-orientated cooperation between the RCC and the CEI.
- The RCC remains devoted to contribute to this process.

Thank you for your attention!