



EU-Western Balkans Zagreb Summit
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**Speech by the Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) *Majlinda Bregu*
at the EU-WB Zagreb Summit**

Closing the convergence with EU starts from enhancing regional economic cooperation

Regional cooperation is always important, but in times like these it becomes even vital. Grappling for the economic recovery will not be an easy call.

Here is a recent example where regional cooperation once more delivered. We are glad that the Green Corridors or green lanes of foods and medicines are now a reality. When RCC initiated the coordination among all stakeholders to make this happen, the situation was dramatic. Thanks to cooperation and political willingness it changed in two weeks.

It has been almost 4 years since we initiated the work on REA. Some *notable successes* have been already generated as part of our common efforts, not least the *Regional Roaming Agreement*. Other regional processes are ongoing and we do hope *additional results are imminent*. I am officially *committing today to full readiness and dedication of RCC towards developing the future of REA Action Plan*, with a view of its prospective endorsement at the Berlin process Summit. The process has already started.

The region is ready to embark on the *next phase of deepening regional economic cooperation to assure the WB6 economies* have ownership first, *and bringing the region closer to the EU internal market*.

New realities call for new adjustments and socio-economic transformation of the region towards:



- ✓ ***Innovation and Digital*** transformation and a WB fit for Digital Age;
 - ✓ boosted ***Connectivity*** (including building on the successful ***Green Corridors in WB with a view to address the structural improvements*** also at the ***borders with EU MS***);
 - ✓ ***Green and Green energy*** transition;
 - ✓ ***a dynamic industrial policy with new and rebuilt regional value chains***;
 - ✓ better integration ***in the Europeanized value chains***;
 - ✓ ***strengthened and upskilled human capital***;
 - ✓ operationalized ***disaster preparedness and response capacity*** at the regional level.
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- **Said that, no brilliant regional plan of action can succeed without a strong *political leadership*.**
 - No future plan on WB will attain necessary results if ***EU WB trajectories are not fully synchronized and converged***.
 - It is ***against the dramatically different context the COVID-19 pandemic has ushered*** that the ***reinvigorated regional economic cooperation agenda must respond to the challenge of managing the crisis while building the future***.
 - As the region is moving from crisis management to recovery, ***Regional cooperation and Togetherness should be important elements of the resolute response***.