



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

MR. HIDO BISCEVIC

**MEETING OF THE SEECP POLITICAL DIRECTORS
27 JANUARY 2011, BUDVA**

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

- It is a privilege for me to address our meeting today. All our gratitude and appreciation is going to our hosts – the Montenegrin SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office (C-i-O). Their dedication represents another invaluable contribution to our common goals. This is best visible through a strengthened cooperation between the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the SEECP C-i-O as it is reflected by the regular held Coordination meetings in the format SEECP Troika, RCC and EU as well as through consultations between SEECP C-i-O on daily basis.
- With a new spirit of cooperation, reconciliation, moderation and pragmatism, the region of South East Europe exhibits encouraging signs of development. These are certainly a good indication to measure our efficiency and prospects of having a region completely reconciled – free of detrimental stereotypes, deeply reformed and irreversibly reoriented towards the EU and Euro-Atlantic integration.
- In order to remain on this path, we need to further translate the new climate in the region into a comprehensive, sustained and broad process that would stem from a genuine all-inclusive cooperation of all relevant participants, ranging from political leadership, parliaments to media and civil society, from business communities to international friends and partners.
- We all know that difficulties and constraints are still present in the region. But one should nevertheless consider the progress that the region managed to attain

through regional cooperation. This captures the momentum when we strive to move forward with the development agenda. This particular drive, I must note, serves as a pertinent stepping-stone for advancing on the path of European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

- The progress is evident, persistently regarding the enlargement policy, both by the countries from the region and on the part of EU. Nevertheless, in my opinion, work is still ahead. Further dedication and commitment to continue with reforms and fulfilment of the necessary requirements will only augment the maintenance and progression of the enlargement momentum confirmed by the EU Council conclusions of December 2010.
- I am convinced that individual advancement on the European and Euro-Atlantic integration path, coupled with a comprehensive, result-driven dialogue with the EU will increase the sustainability of the process and make it an irreversible one. The RCC offers an added value to such an approach by working closely with the members from the region, the EU institutions and other international partners and by guiding and monitoring the cooperation in our region.
- Efforts in this context are ongoing, as it is best exhibited by the meetings that I have held recently with the European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, the Commissioner for Regional Policy, the Director General of the DG Enlargement of the European Commission, political consultations with Bulgaria, Slovenia, Hungary as the current President of the Council of the EU, with the Council of Europe and many other partners.
- During consultations held with Hungary as the current President of the Council of the EU, I proposed the organization of a trilateral Hungarian EU Presidency – SEECP Chair-in-Office - RCC meeting. This would be a valuable platform for exchanging views on more concrete activities for cooperation.
- The message from all these talks is clear: the region is on the right track and is moving ahead, but still much has to be done. The regional cooperation with the prominent role of the RCC is advancing and the expectations are that in the incoming period our efforts should be reflected in delivering concrete and visible results, in particular related to the implementation of the RCC Strategy and Work Programme 2011 – 2013.

- At first sight, the processes in our region might appear to be imbued with a certain degree of complexity, which deals with translating the established goals and objectives into a concrete regional recovery and development approach – a range of result-driven projects and programs that would target areas of evident underdevelopment. However, in order to transform them into reality, a climate of cooperation and mutual openness needs to be the guiding rule in our region.
- Many of these areas, in RCC's opinion and observation, are economic and infrastructural upgrading, curbing corruption and organized crime, diversifying and sustaining energy development. When complemented with political advancement, legislative reforms and societal changes these can reflect the best working formula for the development of our region and for the individual progress that countries from South East Europe are seeking with regards to European and Euro-Atlantic integration.
- An important avenue in this context, I must note, was opened by the RCC Strategy and Work Programme 2011 – 2013. The document was welcomed and its implementation encouraged within the December Conclusions of the General Affairs Council Meeting regarding the EC Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2010 – 2011. This document has the pertinent purpose of responding to the needs of the region and profiling the added value of an enhanced cooperation in key priority areas in SEE. Its goal placed as well in the context of streamlining of regional task forces/initiatives and its subsequent implementation is currently in progress. The RCC Secretariat has already distributed the Questionnaire regarding the streamlining process.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- To achieve progress in many areas of our common concern and furthermore assure its sustainability, particularly in light of the current crisis, a regional recovery and development approach has to be adopted. This approach would certainly have to include our joint work in order to be able to develop and pool together concrete projects in many vital areas for our region, such as energy and infrastructure. The RCC will continue with its efforts in this sense, by working with the European Commission and other EU institutions, relevant regional structures and members from within and outside the region.

- This is reflected by the efforts that we, at RCC Secretariat, are investing in the organization, with the support of the United States Agency for International Development and the European Commission, the Western Balkans Donor Coordination Conference to take place on 31 March 2011 in Brussels. The main aim of the Conference is to address two issues: enhanced donor coordination and strengthened links with regional structures, but also to discuss practical issues in sectorial working groups (Institutional Strengthening and Good Governance, Competitiveness and Knowledge-Based Societies and Infrastructure Development).
- Allow me to briefly reflect on several noteworthy issues and the main up to date results in the key priority areas of the RCC. I would like to note here that taking into consideration available financial resources, appropriate adjustments of the RCC Secretariat, including its Liaison Office, have been carried out and are applicable as of January 2011. These processes are reflective of concrete steps undertaken within the context of implementation of the RCC Strategy and Work Programme 2011 – 2013.
- The field of **economic and social development** was marked by progress on the transfer of the South East European Investment Committee (SEEIC) from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to RCC, strengthening links and cooperation with the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) and Public Private Partnership.
- We have further continued our work in the field of **energy and infrastructure**, by intensifying cooperation with the Energy Community Secretariat in planning and organizing joint events. A reflection of these efforts serves, among other, the Workshop on the Establishment of Aviation National Supervisory Authorities and Certification, Designation and Oversight, which was made possible in cooperation with the Belgian EU Presidency.
- A noteworthy endeavour, undertaken by the RCC and so far overtly successful deals with drafting the Regional Strategic Document and Action Plan in the area of Justice, Home Affairs and Security Cooperation, which is near completion. This is the hallmark of the RCC **justice and home affairs** priority area. The document is expected to be adopted by the SEECF meeting of the Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs.

- An important reflection of the utmost progress achieved in the field of **security cooperation**, is the ‘Statement on Cooperation among the Military Intelligence Institutions of the Members of Regional Cooperation Council from Southeast Europe’, which was signed during the Second South East Europe Military Intelligence Chiefs Conference (SEEMIC) on 29 – 30 September 2010. At the meetings with RACVIAC- Centre for Security Cooperation, special attention was given to the initiative for possible organization of a Meeting of Defense Procurement Directors from SEE Countries under the auspices of NATO.
- Our work features as well with the establishment, within the framework of the **building human capital** priority area, of the Task Force on Culture and Society with the Secretariat to be seated in Cetinje (Montenegro). Tomorrow’s informal meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Foreign Affairs will mark a significant step in this context with the signature of the Protocol on the Host Country Arrangements. Progress has been achieved through supporting the Education Reform Initiative for South East Europe as well as transferring the Ljubljana Process to regional ownership.
- In the field of **parliamentary cooperation**, as an overarching theme, the RCC further concentrated its efforts at supporting the development of the Parliamentary dimension of the SEECP. We are constantly involved in promoting cooperation in this important segment through various regional activities and ventures that further contribute to a deeper understanding of the important role that Parliaments have in the process of reforms and development.
- The RCC Secretariat co-organized with the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) an international conference “Addressing Europe’s Digital Divide: Towards Sustainable Public Service Media in South East Europe” and at the follow-up meeting in Novi Vinodolski a decision was adopted establishing the European Association of Public Service Media in South East Europe, as a non-profit professional association seated in Zagreb.
- Before concluding my remarks, I would like to express my gratitude to our Montenegrin hosts for the myriad of efforts invested, within their Chairmanship to the SEECP, in making this region a better place.

Thank You!