



Roundtable on water and energy nexus in transboundary basins in South East Europe

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Welcome speech by Miroslav Kukobat, Head of Infrastructure and Energy Unit, Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear colleagues,

First of all, on behalf of Mr. Gazmend Turdiu, the RCC Head of Expert Pool, I would like to apologize because he could not join us today due to some urgent commitments and pass his warm regards to all participants.

Expressing sincere gratitude to RCC partners in organizing the event: the German Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, the Global Environment Facility International Waters: Learning Exchange and Resources Network project, the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative, the Global Water Partnership Mediterranean and to distinguished speakers and participants I would also like to wish you all fruitful discussions and valuable outcomes of the Roundtable as well as very nice stay in Sarajevo, the seat of the RCC.

Now, only a few words about the RCC mission and role for the regional cooperation for those of you who might not be familiar with. Through a regionally owned and led framework, the RCC focuses on promotion and enhancement of regional cooperation in SEE and supports European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the aspiring countries. Guided by the all-inclusiveness principle, the RCC provides operational capacities to and works under the political leadership of the SEECP.

Recognizing climate change as one of the major regional challenges and the high level of water sector vulnerability due to changed climate conditions, the RCC included in its ongoing and the new RCC Strategy and Work Programme (RCC SWP) 2014-2016 activities to support creating the necessary conditions for integrated water resources management (IWRM) and facilitate enhancement of cooperation among the RCC participants from SEE in the management of their

trans-boundary water bodies. The importance of IWRM is stressed in the SEE 2020 strategy as the core constituent of the new RCC SWP 2014-2016.

RCC will support regional players in the area of IWRM in activities directed towards building the capacity of stakeholders, improving regional cooperation that contributes to sustainable use of water resources, preparing management plans at the national and trans-boundary levels, identifying financing in this regard and engaging less involved actors including the private sector that can have important role in water infrastructure development. These activities being complementary to the past, ongoing and future regional activities of relevant regional frameworks will aim to reach the political, economic, social and environmental benefits through effective cooperation in the management of trans-boundary waters.

Shared water resources are important contributor to the energy sector in SEE through hydropower production while the same water resources are used for agricultural production and many other purposes. Developing the “green economy” concept and primarily recognizing the interdependence of the water, energy and agriculture sectors, it is clear that better management of trans-boundary water resources can make a substantial contribution towards sectors’ security and ecologically-sound growth.

There are interdependencies between water, energy and food security at all levels- global, regional, national and local. Failing to identify and efficiently address potential effects of one sector on another during decision making, is undermining efforts to achieve sustainability. It is necessary to address this gap by calling for the integrated approach in water resources management. This approach comprising different dimensions of integration: territorial integration, inter-sectoral cooperation, multi-stakeholder involvement and multi-level governance, is strongly supported and promoted by the RCC in Sustainable Growth Pillar of the SEE 2020 strategy as a major prerequisite to ensure consensus based sustainable development.

The European Commission is exploring opportunities to initiate a new phase under the EU Water Initiative (EUWI) focusing on Water, Energy and Food Nexus. The Greek Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change leads the Mediterranean Component of the EUWI (Med EUWI) while the GWP-Med serves as the Secretariat of the Med EUWI. The conclusions of our event will be also relevant for providing inputs for the new phase of the EUWI and contribute to initiating a wider dialogue on Water, Energy and Food Nexus in SEE with a view of introducing related considerations in the river basin management frameworks.

The RCC is interested to support resource efficiency, sustainable use and integrated management of natural primarily water resources, being aware of huge potentials inadequately used, for the benefit of the whole region. Transboundary water cooperation is exceptionally important aspect. Local authorities are major beneficiaries of appropriately established cooperation. Raising the

awareness on the political level of the need to develop efficient transboundary cooperation and sustained political support for long-term cooperation is a challenge that RCC is ready to undertake facilitating efforts of relevant national authorities and professional organizations in the area.

Thank you all once again.