

Overview of Key Activities of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat **December 2008**

1.

RCC Secretariat concluded 2008 series of presentations across Southeast European capitals

Experts of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat ended the 2008 series of presentations on the organization's work across Southeast Europe (SEE) in Ankara on 2 December. On this occasion, Turkish Deputy Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, Zergun Koruturk, highlighted the RCC role as the main interlocutor of the European Commission for identifying and facilitating regional projects in Southeast Europe. She stressed that the RCC presentation would help develop Turkish priorities and projects in regional cooperation, especially in view of the incoming Turkish SEECF Chairmanship-in-Office. The 2009 series of presentation is expected to open early in the year in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the host of the RCC Secretariat, and continue in the remaining SEE capitals and in Brussels, the seat of European and Euro-Atlantic institutions.

2.

RCC Secretary General took part in the 16th OSCE Ministerial Meeting in Helsinki on 5 December 2008

RCC Secretary General informed the meeting participants of RCC priorities, structure of the RCC Secretariat as well as ongoing projects of the organization, and proposed that the RCC and OSCE explore the possibilities for strengthening cooperation.

3.

RCC Secretariat hosted journalists from SEE and Brussels on 5 December 2008

The journalists were welcomed by the Deputy Secretary General, Jelica Minić, who informed them on the highlights of the RCC structure and activities. The visit was an excellent opportunity for exchanging views with the RCC experts from relevant priority areas as well as for catching up with the current developments within the RCC framework.

4.

Conference on establishment of the International Law Enforcement Coordination Units (ILECUs) in Western Balkans was launched in Vienna on 9 December 2008 under the auspices of the Austrian Ministry of Interior, relevant Slovenian and Romanian ministries, and the Secretariat of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)

ILECUs are going to be implemented under the EC CARDS Regional Programmes 2005 on Justice and Home Affairs in the next 24 months and involve six countries as beneficiaries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and The Former Yugoslav Republic of

Macedonia. Commenting on the project, Deputy RCC Secretary General Jelica Minic said the RCC fully supported and would actively participate in promotion, advancement and connecting of ILECU as one of the most important projects in the overall regional cooperation in the Western Balkans, with all related regional structures.

5.

RCC Secretary General held political consultations with Albanian Prime Minister and other high officials on 9 December 2008 in Tirana

The visit was a part of series of political consultations with RCC members from Southeast Europe. Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha and Secretary General Biscevic concurred that Southeast Europe (SEE) maintains continuous measured progress towards European integration by carrying out sustained reform policies in the region. Secretary General Biscevic underlined that present financial and economic turmoil in Europe and the world additionally calls not only for enhanced cooperation in our region, but urges for a broader, strategic approach when addressing the development needs of SEE. Albanian Prime Minister stressed his country's commitment to designing and implementing, with other SEE countries, concrete regional projects. At a meeting with Albanian Foreign Minister Lulzim Basha, Secretary General Biscevic informed of RCC activities on establishing a permanent cooperation mechanism among RCC Secretariat, RCC National Coordinators from Southeast Europe, the European Commission and relevant international financial institutions, aimed at stimulating development in the region. Minister Basha expressed readiness of Albanian authorities to take part in RCC projects. During the visit, the RCC Secretary General also met with the Albanian Deputy Minister of Integration, Albert Gajo.

6.

29 members of the RCC Board met in Sarajevo on 12 December 2008

In his report to the Board members, the RCC Secretary General Hido Biscevic informed of the Secretariat's main activities in the final quarter of 2008: an outreach campaign the RCC experts carried across the Southeast European capitals; the process of networking among RCC National Coordinators from Southeast Europe, the RCC Secretariat, the European Commission and relevant international financial institutions; political consultations with RCC members from Southeast Europe and outside the region; and enhanced dialogue with other regional organizations and initiatives. Secretary General stressed that, in 2009, the RCC Secretariat will focus on project and result-oriented activities with a view to achieving overall economic and social progress in Southeast Europe, consolidating the region's European and Euro-Atlantic potential and perspective.

7.

Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina and RCC Secretariat hosted a workshop "Parliaments – Support to Harmonized Energy Reforms in Southeast Europe" which took place in Sarajevo on 15 December 2008

Opening remarks were delivered by the Chairman of the Committee for Transport and Communications of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Branko Dokic, the RCC Secretary General, Hido Biscevic, and the Head of the Regional Secretariat for

Parliamentary Cooperation, Vladimir Danchev. The participants discussed a Western Balkans energy policy survey, prepared by the International Energy Agency experts, as well as the implementation of the Energy Community Treaty, EU energy policy, Western Balkans integration and the EU, energy efficiency as a tool in mitigating climate change, energy supply security, competitiveness and new employment. The workshop was also attended by representatives of the European Commission's Directorate General for Transport and Energy, the World Bank, the UN Economic Commission for Europe, the International Energy Agency and the Energy Community Secretariat.

8.

RCC Secretariat announced winners of its 2008 Essay and Photo Contest on 16 December 2008

The Secretariat of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) announced the winners of its Essay and Photo Contest 2008, which was open for submission of works in September/October 2008. The theme of the contest was Regional Cooperation in Southeast Europe (SEE). The works were to reflect the RCC mission of promoting mutual cooperation and European and Euro-Atlantic integration of SEE in order to inspire development in the region to the benefit of its people. They were to mirror readiness and ability of SEE people to take responsibility for their future, and to create, through dialogue and cooperation, conditions for overall progress of the region and a climate of tolerance and encouragement.

9.

Chairwoman of EP Delegation for Relations with the Countries of South East Europe Doris Pack visited the RCC Secretariat on 19 December 2008

Secretary General Biscevic informed Chairwoman Pack of the Secretariat's activities in the priority areas of economic and social development, infrastructure and energy, justice and home affairs, security cooperation, building human capital and parliamentary cooperation. Doris Pack expressed interest in the RCC Secretariat's work, especially when it comes to parliamentary cooperation, and in learning more about the activities of the Sofia-based Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation in South East Europe. She positively assessed the RCC efforts to raise awareness at the level of parliaments of the key priority areas in South East Europe, such as energy, education and environmental protection.

Sarajevo, 12 January 2009