



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

MR. HIDO BISCEVIC

**ANNUAL MEETING OF THE REGIONAL COOPERATION COUNCIL
28 JUNE 2011, BECICI**

Excellencies,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is really an honor to address you all here, in Bečići, on the occasion of the third Annual Meeting of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). Together with our co-host, the South East European Cooperation Process (SEEC) Chairmanship in Office - Republic of Montenegro - we are pleased to welcome you at this beautiful place on Montenegrin coastline.

Allow me to open our discussion by stating that the overall developments in the South East Europe and the regional cooperation have exhibited encouraging signs. Current level of regional cooperation in South East Europe is the reflection of a new spirit of reconciliation, moderation and pragmatism. A new climate in the region - translated into a comprehensive, sustained and broad process of all-inclusive cooperation of all relevant participants, from political leadership, parliaments to media and civil society, from business communities to international friends and partners- has prevailed.

Consolidation of peace and sustainable development in the South East Europe as well as the advancement toward the integration of our part of Europe to the European and Euro-Atlantic institutions is of particular importance having in mind the recent events in other regions of the world, in particular, in the Middle East and North Africa and new challenges and threats to the global and European stability and security.

In the third year of its full operation, RCC has proved itself as a valuable framework for cooperation in an environment where many challenges, difficulties and oscillations are still present.

The countries of the region, in spite of some set-backs, took on difficult and ambitious reforms to prepare themselves for the European integration and to attain maximum advancement on the European and Euro-Atlantic path. The advancement achieved is the most important indicator of the changes taking place in the region of the South East Europe.

This momentum should be kept and nourished.

The finalization of Croatia's EU accession negotiations will have a very positive impact on other enlargement countries. I do believe these positive trends will allow the EU institutions to make, in line with the reconfirmed European perspective at EU-Western Balkans Forum in Luxembourg, important decisions in next months. That would keep the enlargement momentum, give additional impetus for regional cooperation and even create an environment conducive to solving the remaining bilateral issues.

RCC, in my opinion, has offered an added value to these positive trends by working together closely with SEECP C-i-O, its members from and outside the region, the EU institutions and other international partners.

The successful cooperation, between SEECP C-i-O and RCC has been further strengthened. The practice of holding regular Coordination meetings of the SEECP Troika with the RCC Secretariat, with participation of the EU institutions, proved to be a very useful tool in providing guidance and enhancing overall coordination. By focusing on the envisaged activities in the context of the implementation of the priorities of the SEECP C-i-O as it was the case with the current Montenegrin C-i-

O and the RCC Strategy and Work Programme 2011-2013 we have achieved a considerable level of synergy and our intention is to continue along the same path in this regard. We have already held consultations with high officials of Republic of Serbia in order to discuss the coordination of the activities of both fora during the incoming Serbian SEECF C-i-O.

The countries from the region have manifested a growing evidence of a deep understanding of benefits that can be collected from a sustained, all-inclusive regional cooperation. RCC remains fully committed to the principle of all inclusiveness and is determined to continue with its good offices, supporting the EU facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Prishtina and appraising initial results.

In many other instances RCC has managed to find a way to provide pragmatic and flexible solutions to preserve this spirit of cooperation and to serve the best long term interests of its members from the region.

With adopted Strategy and Work Programme 2011-2013, we have successfully embarked on an elaborate and project-orientated path, where the persistent work on regional recovery and development projects in all priority sectors will ultimately lead to re-profiling of our region by bringing European standards into each and every segment of economic, social and cultural life.

Although my Annual Report enlists in details the results of the RCC Secretariat's work in implementing its Strategy and Work Programme 2011-2013, I would like to emphasize few most important achievements and our plans for their follow-up.

Looking over the past couple of years, the economics of our region went through the difficult period. Despite some encouraging signs in terms of recovery, difficulties are still with us. RCC has recognized the potential of the EU's Europe 2020 Strategy for articulating a new regional vision for economic and social development of South East Europe.

We believe that this Strategy may provide a new comprehensive platform for economic and social advancement of our region even in the context of the EU enlargement policy. In addition it provides the RCC with a valuable tool to proceed

with the process of streamlining of regional task forces and initiatives, with a view to have a network of those to be affiliated to the RCC.

RCC strategic role has been manifested in Justice and Home Affairs Area through the *Regional Strategic Document and Action Plan* on Justice and Home Affairs 2011-2013, featuring fight against organized crime and corruption.

We have also ensure closer coordination among law enforcement, judicial, intelligence and security structures.

In the area of energy and infrastructure the RCC Secretariat continued to promote sustainable energy development in the region as the key prerequisite of the 'green economy' concept by backing implementation of the Sustainable Energy Development Regional Initiative (SEDRI), jointly launched by RCC and CEI.

The RCC Secretariat's contribution to preparation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EU SDR) was explicitly recognized by this document and SEDRI was quoted as an example of a project in the Action Plan of the Strategy.

In the area of transport, we focused our efforts on air traffic and road safety. We supported and facilitated adoption and implementation of the Single European Sky legislation. We worked in line with EU directives and regulations in order to raise capacities of national administrations to cope more effectively with the critical issues of road safety.

Taking into account the need of the region to pull together resources for large scale trans-national projects RCC is putting special emphasize on the transport sector. The regional infrastructure, as one of the most essential prerequisites for sustainable economic development, in general, is in a poor condition. The recent World Bank's Study on the railroads in SEE, clearly indicates the efforts that should be put in developing a regional approach in this area. In view of prioritizing the regional infrastructure goals and creating conditions for their practical realization it will be very important to receive an appropriate political support. I would appreciate this particular issue to become a flagship project of the region in the period ahead.

In the security area, the RCC Secretariat initiated several activities. The most important one, marking the turning point in security cooperation, was the first conference of the SEE Forum of the Chiefs of National Security Authorities.

In the area of building human capital we have actively supported the implementation of the project Building Capacity for Structural Reform in Higher Education of Western Balkan Countries and the Task Force on Culture and Society which was launched a week ago in Cetinje.

Parliamentary cooperation was also very much on the move. In the field of media cooperation it is essentially important that by now we have the Association of Public Service Media established.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To conclude, let me stress once again, that over the past year, regional cooperation in South East Europe advanced further in terms of its consolidation. The framework provided by the synergy between the SEECP and the RCC remains pivotal for the ultimate goal of the region to reach peace and security, economic prosperity and full integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

RCC appreciates the fruitful and frank dialogue it has established with the RCC members and various stakeholders. We are strongly committed to further intensify this cooperation with aim of receiving your valuable ideas and recommendations. By working together we can provide substantial contribution in translating the overall positive regional trends into a sustainable and comprehensive process and deduce concrete development projects so as to address the economic and social needs of the region. It will certainly positively determine the ability of RCC to ensure a continued progress in the implementation of the RCC Strategy and Work Programme 2011-2013.

The RCC Secretariat will continue to invest all its efforts in achieving more tangible results and added value in the implementation of the activities within its priority areas.

On behalf of the RCC Secretariat and on my personal behalf, I would like to extend the gratitude to the Montenegrin SEECF C-i-O and to all RCC members, especially those from the region, for enhanced readiness to make the best use of the RCC to the national and regional benefit. I am confident that productive work will continue under the Serbian Chairmanship in Office.

I wish to express our gratitude to the EU and its institutions, European Commission in particular, for continuing support to our work with a wish that this cooperation will be further intensified and that the activities of the RCC shall even further contribute to successful implementation of the EU enlargement policy.

Thank you.