

RCC Secretary General Amer Kapetanović for Anadolu Agency

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RCC Secretary General Kapetanović highlights the importance of regional ownership

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ISTANBUL/ANKARA (AA) – Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretary General **Amer Kapetanović** highlighted the importance of the principle of regional ownership, saying: “This is our region, our geography. If we understand it that way and act accordingly, we can make a difference”.

Kapetanović spoke to an Anadolu Agency reporter on the margins of the 9th Istanbul Mediation Conference.

Commenting on the importance of the conference and its role in supporting dialogue, **Kapetanović** said he appreciated Türkiye’s role in this area and the timing of the conference in light of global developments. At a time of dozens of crises and wars, he said, someone has to step forward and take responsibility for mediation.

Kapetanović noted that Türkiye is very important, highlighting its role as an interregional power and as the host of the conference, as well as its involvement in the Balkan Peace Platform and the RCC, where it serves as its Board participant.

He said that, in this way, Türkiye supports regional cooperation in South East Europe and the RCC’s expanding activities from the Western Balkans into the wider South East Europe region. He also underlined the importance of security cooperation alongside socio-economic issues.

Kapetanović said that the support of the 25 participants represented on the RCC Board is of great importance to the organisation, adding that it continues to foster trust and common interests among partners in the region.

Reflecting on stability in the Balkans, **Kapetanović** said that stronger regional cooperation in the Western Balkans can also contribute to social and economic convergence with the European Union (EU), adding that he sees genuine determination in this regard.

Kapetanović said that they are working together to support economic growth in the region and improve living standards, stressing that people expect tangible results and that the process needs to move faster.

The importance of interregional connectivity

Emphasising the importance of interregional connectivity, **Kapetanović** said: “The Western Balkans, South East Europe, Central Asia – connecting these regions is very important. As an inclusive organisation, I see the RCC as one of key regional platforms and hubs for making this kind of cooperation happen”.

Kapetanović stressed that the success of the RCC stems from its convening and persuasive power, as well as its commitment to the principle of regional ownership.

Pointing out that the region does not need others to tell it what should be done, **Kapetanović** said: “This is our region, our geography. If we understand it that way and act accordingly, we can make a difference”.

Kapetanović added that such an approach would help the Western Balkans continue moving closer to the EU by narrowing the social and economic convergence gap, while also contributing to the broader cooperation process in South East Europe.