



# REGIONAL FORUM

ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE UNECE REGION

13 – 14 MARCH 2024 | HYBRID EVENT | GENEVA & ONLINE

## SIDE EVENT CONCEPT NOTE

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### Event title

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Human security and resilience in South East Europe in the context of South East Europe 2030 Strategy

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### Background and Rationale

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The South East European (SEE) economies adopted SEE2030 Strategy, an ambitious plan for regional cooperation to promote regional implementation of UN Sustainable Development Goals in 2021. The SEE2030 aims to eradicate poverty and decelerate depopulation through enhancing quality of life in the region as its two main objectives. The Strategy was developed and started its implementation at the time when the Covid-19 pandemic struck the region just as hard as it did other regions of Europe.

The SEE2030, prepared in full consultation with the SEE economies, was an offspring of the ordeals people were confronted with at those difficult days of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the post-pandemic period, the region faced a number of catastrophic natural disasters, including disastrous earthquakes, wildfires and seasonal floods, which claimed thousands of lives, spoiled agricultural lands and threatened food security of people in the region. Even though solidarity within the region reached impeccable levels, three years of SEE2030 implementation show that the region still needs relentless work on enhancing human security and strengthening its resilience.

Depopulation trends in SEE region have been an overgrowing concern. Population of the region of thirteen economies, estimated at 150 million people in 2020, is projected to decrease by 20% in 80 years. According to the UN Population Office, the SEE population will be 122 million people in 2100 according to the medium fertility scenario. The average estimated depopulation rate for SEE in the next 80 years is 6.7 per thousand. Depopulation of SEE stems from a combination of natural causes and high tendency of emigration.

As regards natural causes, another important point of socio-economic concern will be the aging of societies in SEE. According to the UN World Population Prospects, the dependency ratio of old people to the working age population in SEE was 26.4% in 2020 and is forecasted to rise to 33.2% in 2030 and 54.6% in 2060. Such a significant hike of 28 percent points in 40 years would jeopardise sustainability of public social security systems of both pension coverage and universal public care.

The current migration channels flowing from Southeast to Western Europe is a quick proxy displaying the region's ever-existing convergence gap with its Western neighbours. In the global conjuncture where the progress in build-back-better agenda turned to negative, the divergence in human security and resilience conditions between the regions of Europe carry a significant risk of further accelerating depopulation trends in SEE region. The current emigration has already led to the significant depletion of young and educated part of the region's human capital, accelerating aging of the remaining ones.

People-oriented policy actions require holistic interventions based on a bottom-up approach rather than compartmentalised top-down policy actions. Through its all-inclusive structures between thirteen economies, SEE2030 instrumentalises regional cooperation mechanisms to



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propose solutions to the region's challenges. Uniqueness of the SEE2030 mechanism stems from the highest level of ownership.

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## Session objectives and expected outcomes

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The session objective is to explain, promote and raise awareness about the role of SEE2030 Strategy as a regional initiative to implement UN 2030 Agenda and SDGs in a way to propose all-inclusive policy actions for regional cooperation. In this context, the current challenges faced by the region led the Strategy to embed human security and resilience into its main objectives aiming to eradicate poverty and decelerate depopulation through enhancing quality of life in the region. Thus, this session will be one of the ongoing SEE2030's events to promote human security and resilience, and given the framework of the event quite suitably explain the root causes of depopulation trends in a comprehensive manner. In this context, the session aims to present shortly the priorities of SEE2030 and the current challenges confronted by the region as a scene-setter. The root causes of depopulation trends in the SEE region and their current impact on its human capital will be presented together with the projections of future socioeconomic challenges to be faced by quickly aging societies in the region. The official representatives of SEE economies will be accompanied by a young delegate who would speak on behalf of youth of the region to reflect on their understanding of these challenges affecting not only their lives at present but the future of their economies. The results of the session will be reported to the governance structures of SEE2030 Strategy and South East Europe Cooperation Process (SEECPP).

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## Agenda and Structure

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### **12:00-12:10 – Opening Speech by RCC Secretariat**

Mr. Amer Kapetanovic, Head of Political Department

### **12:10 – 12:30 – Keynote Speech by UN Population Fund (confirmed)**

Ms Florence Bauer, Regional Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia

### **12:30- 13:45 Panel discussion by SEE economies**

Representatives of the governments of Romania, Serbia, and Türkiye, and a youth delegate from SEE region

Mr Christian Iordache, PR and Communication Advisor, Department for Sustainable Development, Government of Romania (confirmed)

Ms Jasmina Muric, Acting Assistant Minister, Ministry of family, welfare and demography, Government of Serbia (confirmed)

Representative of the government of Türkiye (to be confirmed)

Representative of youth councils from South East Europe (to be confirmed)

Panel discussion will be moderated by RCC Secretariat

Moderator: Mr Umut Ergezer, SEE2030 Coordinator

### **13:45 – 14:15 Questions and Answers (to be open for online participants)**



**14:15 – 14:30 Wrap-up by RCC Secretariat**