



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)  
Permanent Council**

Vienna, 14 April 2011

**Address by RCC Secretary General, Mr. Hido Biscevic**

Chairperson, Mr. Secretary General, Excellencies,

I want to thank the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office for the kind invitation to address the distinguished Permanent Council.

Allow me also to share with you some observations on the current situation in South East Europe from the RCC point of view.

In general, the region is on the positive move. Some frustrative situations still emerge and several unresolved issues still shadow the region's landscape, but in general, we witness an enhanced spirit of rapprochement, reconciliation, moderation and pragmatism.

These are encouraging signs. They help not only to realize the EU aspirations of the enlargement countries from the region, but they are key pillars of long lasting positive profiling of the region, deeply reformed and irreversibly anchored with EU and Euro-Atlantic integration.

But, in order to remain on this path, there is a clear need to translate this new climate into a comprehensive and broad process that will ensure genuine, all inclusive cooperation at all levels and among all relevant participants, ranging from political leaders, parliament to media and civil society, from regional business communities to our international friends and partners.

In a word, trends need to be translated into durable and sustainable policies.

They need to become an additional charger for reinvigorated regional recovery and development approach that would result in pooling together, on the sectorial and functional basis, critically needed regional projects in the areas where underdevelopment is evident, namely energy, infrastructure and transport, so as to best respond to the harsh effects of the current crisis.

In my mind, this approach would only be complementary to the EU membership of the enlargement countries of the region.

Now, on the enlargement side, the trend is also positive, both on the part of the countries from the region and the EU. I am confident that the finalization of the accession negotiations by one of our Members, plus hopefully further advancement by others during this year, will be of paramount importance to keep the momentum and ensure that the entire South East Europe is mapped within the EU.

The EU Council Conclusions from December 2010 confirm the EU commitments, but also indicate that much work is still ahead, both in terms of accession related reforms and in terms of responsible and timely resolution of the remaining issues in the region.

This point is of crucial importance. Should there be a prolonged status quo regarding these issues, it may hamper the enlargement, thus creating unwanted strategic vacuum in the Western Balkans.

Such a vacuum would not be compatible with the overall European and Euro-Atlantic strategic interests.

On this note, one needs to remain confident that the open issues will gain new momentum this year, in terms of dealing with fundamentally important constitutional debate in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in terms of continuation of well formatted and continuous Belgrade-Prishtina dialogue, in terms of finding a way forward in the ongoing dialogue between Skopje and Athens and, in general, in terms of preserving the overall regional cooperative spirit conducive to moderation, pragmatism and mutual appeasement and against sometimes frustrative domestic constraints reflecting the emerging issues.

There is no doubt that each and every of the RCC Members from South East Europe would benefit from the commitment to resolve these issues and there is no doubt about the appreciative recognition on the part of our EU and Euro-Atlantic partners.

In my mind, this is why all actors in the region need to be guided by a broader picture and strategic goals, not to be distracted by issues that may, from time to time, reflect internal agendas, but cloud foreign policy goals.

The Regional Cooperation Council at this point wants to work and benefit from these positive trends in the region.

Profiled by now as a key forum for guiding and monitoring cooperation in the region, the RCC started vigorously to implement the Strategy and Work Programme for 2011-2013.

Initial assessments from our EU and international partners are positive and encouraging. But, at the same time, as this Work Programme is also a reflection of the needs and initiatives coming from the region, there is still much room for commitment to the RCC work, by Governments in the region.

This is the only way to ensure that the RCC will deliver.

At this point, the RCC Secretariat is engaged in a wide range of activities related to the Work Programme.

By way of illustrating, RCC has recently signed with Montenegro the Agreement on hosting the future Task Force for Culture and Society. By doing so, we will take over from the Council of Europe the entire responsibility for the project of restoration of cultural heritage and monuments in the region. I intend to twin this project with the initiative to establish a regional restoration center and launching of multinational restoration teams.

In line with the need for the region to take over its own responsibility for crucially important sectors of development, RCC will take over from OECD the SEE Investment Committee, later in the year. It is needless to emphasize how important this step will be for the region.

In addition, the RCC is by now fully engaged with the European Commission in the context of Multi-beneficiary IPA programming.

At this point, the RCC is heavily engaged in concrete work – from developing a Public Private Partnership Network to the recent endorsement of a Regional Strategy for fighting organized crime and corruption; from implementation of the Single Sky agreement to ensuring cooperation among defence and intelligence sector in the region; from bringing together universities around the students exchange programmes to bringing together public broadcasters in the region around shared European editorial standards and assistance in the digitalization process, etc.

This brief outline also indicates the mission of the RCC – to build on the positive political trends in the region to insert concrete initiatives and projects that will ensure irreversibility of the process and bring us together around shared needs in so many sectors, to the individual benefit of every Member.

This a painstaking work. There will be no spectacular overnight successes.

We need to progress steadily in order to preserve what we have achieved.

One of the quick starters and strategic chargers of development certainly could be a number of large-scale infrastructure projects on trans-national basis, combining foreign investment, public private partnership and national funds.

Last but not least, we need to adopt the notion of moderation, pragmatism, flexibility and, I dare say, also inventiveness in order to deal with some aspects of regional cooperation, in particular related to regional trade, regional transport, regional disaster preparedness and some others.

In the period ahead, the region may only benefit from complementing EU oriented efforts with developing and implementing joint regional recovery and development projects in the myriad of sectors.

Thank you.

### **Responses to the address by the RCC Secretary General:**

- [European Union](#)
- [United States of America](#) (as delivered by H.E. Mr. Ian Kelly, Ambassador of the United States Mission to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe)