



**Opening speech by RCC Secretary General Amer Kapetanovic**

**at the**

**Second Regional Conference on Youth Cultural Cooperation**

**Sarajevo, 15 August 2026**

Students, filmmakers, friends,

First and foremost, I am very glad that we are once again partnering with the Sarajevo Film Festival.

I am especially pleased that this year we have managed to bring to Sarajevo 25 students from academies of dramatic and visual arts across the Western Balkans. This was made possible through our **Western Balkans Youth Lab project**, with special thanks to Ogi.

And it is no small thing to have you here as **Talents Sarajevo marks its 20th anniversary**. It is, in fact, older than the RCC-although it cannot, by any means, be older than me.

In those 20 years, hundreds of young people from this region and beyond have entered this programme with nothing yet proven. A great many of them are now working professionals: directors, producers, editors, cinematographers and critics. Some have returned here as mentors. One went from this programme all the way to the **Caméra d'Or in Cannes**.

My congratulations to the Sarajevo Film Festival and to everyone who has kept this programme alive for two decades.

**Very few things in our region survive for 20 years.**

Which brings me to a simple question: **Why is a diplomat standing in a cinema this morning?**

No, we did not bring you here for this speech. We brought you here for excellent masterclasses, inspiring discussions and the opportunity to meet people from across the film industry.

So why am I here and why did we get involved in the first place?

Part of the answer lies in the theme of this year's Talents Sarajevo: **Reality, Rewritten.**

For almost two decades, the RCC has also been trying to rewrite some of our region's gloomier realities – not by rewriting history, but by bringing governments and other stakeholders together to write the script for the future.

It is often slow and bureaucratic. Sometimes it is painful. But it is also promising.

This is our story, and that is why we wanted to support yours. We have been doing so since 2017 through our patronage of the **Heart of Sarajevo for Best Student Film.**

**You are also rewriting reality, except that your job is much harder.**

It may look easier because no intergovernmental agreement is necessary and no political correctness is required. Once an agreement is signed, it remains signed.

**A film, however, has to win people over again at every screening, with every audience, every time.**

I am not sure you fully realise how consequential your role is.

The world has never produced **so many images** yet understood itself **so poorly**. People are being told who their neighbour is by someone who has never met that neighbour.

**A rule cannot correct that. A good story can.**

That is why I believe this region, and not only this region, **needs good stories now more than it has in a long time.**

We need stories that pursue the truth and stories that offer hope. Not stories that merely meet someone else's expectations, but stories that are genuinely yours and genuinely worth telling.

I wish you the courage and perseverance to tell your stories.

Twenty years from now, somebody will repeat a line from one of your films in a taxi and will no longer remember where it came from. That is the power you are being handed.

**Use it to bring the people of this region closer together.**

We will be back next year, and the year after.

**This is not a project. It is a commitment.**

Congratulations again to the Festival. Have a wonderful 20th edition of Talents Sarajevo – and memorable days and nights here in Sarajevo.