

SPEAKING POINTS

OF THE HEAD OF EU DELEGATION TO BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA/EU SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE, AMBASSADOR PETER SORENSEN

INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA) MULTI- BENEFICIARY PROGRAMME COORDINATION MEETING

15-16 NOVEMBER 2011, SARAJEVO

Secretary General, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- It is my pleasure to be in company of colleagues working on such a key issue to European Integration as the **regional cooperation**.

- I am particularly happy that the RCC co-organises this event with the European Commission. And I would like to extend my gratitude to the Secretary General for being the host.

- Regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations are **essential elements of the Stabilisation and Association process**. And the importance the EU attaches to regional cooperation has been reiterated in numerous Commission and EU Council documents, most recently the Commission's Enlargement Strategy 2011-2012.

- Regional cooperation is an integral part of the process of **integration into the EU**, which often necessitates regional approaches and measures. Regional cooperation underpins and enhances **reconciliation** in a region that suffered conflicts in the recent

past. Regional cooperation and **trade** can and will undoubtedly bring further economic benefits to the region.

- However, **region-building** in the Western Balkans is **far from finished** if you look at for example the **trade and investment patterns**. Intra-regional trade levels desires for much more and regional cross-border investments, volumes are often smaller than investments from South Korea or China! Concerning investment many of the region's countries score low on the "Doing Business" index (Bosnia is #125, FYROM (22), Montenegro (56) Croatia (80), Albania (82), Serbia (92) and Kosovo (117), And this having in mind that one of the Copenhagen economic criteria is a functioning market economy as well as the **capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces** within the Union.
- Another example is the need to develop **infrastructure** in the region. I will take Bosnia and Herzegovina as an example. It is **at the heart** of the Western Balkan region. Yet this heart has clogged infrastructure arteries, with only few dozens of kilometers of Corridor Vc from Budapest to the Adriatic Sea coast in full operation (65 out of 335 km). And this is having in mind that over 60% of all population and economy of the country lives next to the route. A fully functional corridor Vc will provide a boost for economy, tourism and save valuable time for transit.. The **infrastructure build up is a clear priority for the country and for the region**, if it wants to catch-up with the rest in terms of competitiveness and export-oriented economy. And if it wants to stand a chance attracting foreign direct investment.
- The time is therefore right to focus on **large-scale regional projects**, specifically on infrastructure, but also in energy, energy efficiency and environment sectors. This is

the message I have heard many times during the first two months meetings with my local counterparts, from Presidents to civil society organizations. Therefore, let's make use of tools like Western Balkan Investment Facility precisely to support these efforts.

- Key for effective EU integration are the **parliaments. They need** to deal efficiently with the EU related demands and have a proper capacity to adopt EU related legislation. This is necessary not only *to become a member* of the EU but *to function as a member* of the EU. **RCC's role so far in facilitating parliamentary exchanges, sharing legislative know-how and common agenda-building cannot be understated.** It goes to the heart of regional ownership, and it greatly helps national acquis adoption plans and Stabilisation and Association process overall. I therefore **welcome the Multi-beneficiary 2012 project on Parliamentary cooperation which is spot on.**

- **Importance of Communication and Visibility linked to IPA and EU efforts in the region overall.**
- We all have a role to play as communicators to make the benefits of both our policies and projects well-known to the public.
- It is not for the sake to make the European Union more popular in the eyes of the public. It is for the sake to explain what are our priorities and what are the benefits of the policies we agreed, what reforms they will demand and support, how we complete transformation so that we end up with as many "wins-wins" as possible.
- The focus group research that the Delegation did here in Sarajevo showed that it is quite a wide gap between the language we speak in these meetings and what average

citizen in the region knows about national and multi-beneficiary IPA, so **we need to do more.**

FINALLY

- **The EU is the best example of successful regional cooperation. It** was built on foundations of free trade and common European standards, covering more and more policy fields. Today we cannot imagine the European Union without trans-national transport links, the four freedoms of movement and a single voice. **Let's continue to work together to bring the countries of the Western Balkans closer to the EU.**

Thank you for your attention, and once again – I wish you all stimulating discussions on future regional projects.