



**ADDRESS OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE REGIONAL COOPERATION
COUNCIL (RCC), HIDO BISCEVIC,**

**CONSTITUTIVE MEETING OF THE RCC TASK FORCE
ON CULTURE AND SOCIETY**

23 JUNE 2011, CETINJE

Honorable Minister Micunovic, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- I am honoured to welcome you all here on the occasion of the Constitutive Meeting of the RCC Task Force on Culture and Society.
- I would like to thank the Government of Montenegro, not just for the excellent cooperation we have had in organising this event, but for exemplary cooperation between the Regional Cooperation Council and the Montenegrin SEECF Chairmanship-in-Office. One of the most concrete and important results of this partnership is opening of the Secretariat of the RCC Task Force on Culture and Society here in Cetinje, the old royal Capital of Montenegro.
- Allow me to briefly share with you, from the RCC point of view, some observations on the current situation in the region that may cast additional light to this event.
- Recently, we have been witnessing that notions such as rapprochement, reconciliation and pragmatism are increasingly taking root in the region, maintaining it on the positive move.
- One needs to realize the importance of this development, particularly in the region, where the consequences of the recent past, but also of a current economic and financial crisis, still reverberate and where potential uncertainties can still surface.
- This is why further embedding positive trends in regional cooperation, with the relevant commitment and determination, can advance the climate necessary for alleviating residual problems, thus paving the way for the myriad of possibilities to develop results-orientated projects and improve the profile of our part of Europe.
- In my mind, this approach can only complement the EU and/or Euro-Atlantic perspectives of the countries from the region. Moreover, as we are already witnessing progress on this path, with Croatia on the threshold of full membership. With this approach other candidates will follow soon, including Montenegro as a next forerunner.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Today's event is one of the responses to the needs of the region, which was possible due to the fruitful cooperation of all the stakeholders involved. In this context, the RCC guided by its Strategy and Work Programme 2011-2013, is gradually advancing the goal of bringing the region around concrete regional projects.
- A firm commitment and determination to continue along the same path, as we all are observing today, has the real potential to move only forward.
- I am content to note that the Task Force on Culture and Society, established in accordance with the RCC Strategy and Work Programme 2011-2013, will have as its main objective in the inception phase to coordinate activities at the regional level and monitor progress of the implementation of Ljubljana Process II, aiming to foster rehabilitation and preservation of the cultural heritage in South East Europe. This project will significantly contribute to the promotion of vital social and economic importance of heritage, bringing benefits to communities and encouraging tourism at sites of great historic and symbolic value.
- After all, cultural diversity and variety of different national identities should be turned into a richness of our region and our contribution to the diversity of Europe.
- Apart from this specific mission, the RCC Task Force on Culture and Society will be a consistent platform for dialogue of relevant stakeholders on the issues related to strengthening regional cooperation in the sphere of culture. The subsequent goal is to maximize the benefits of investment in culture through its contribution to sustainable economic and social development by ensuring the coherency with other actions promoted at regional and national level.
- As I have mentioned earlier, this regional project is the result of a constructive dialogue and cooperation with all the stakeholders involved and in this context, I would like in particular to thank the European Commission and Council of Europe for their strategic assistance in developing this new platform for cultural cooperation in South East Europe. Representatives of these institutions had a tremendous role in enabling efficient transfer of the coordination of the regional project "Ljubljana Process" to this regionally owned structure.
- Dear members of the RCC Task Force, I am confident that your active work here in Cetinje and permanent guidance of the RCC Secretariat, will respond accordingly to the tasks and challenges ahead of us.
- In this endeavour, I wish us all a fruitful meeting and success in future work.

Thank you for your attention.