



**Talking point by Secretary General of the  
Regional Cooperation Council, Majlinda Bregu  
at the 10th Berlin Process Summit**

16 October 2023, Tirana

Excellences,

Our vibrant *Tirana connects us* all here today, just less than a year since the pioneering EU-WB Summit, projecting strongly its already *attested “aura” as a place of purposeful dialogue*.

Yet, this Summit takes place in a *deteriorating global and regional context in peril*, with *spiked tensions*, which *shake* and *humble* us to our core.

In such a context, allow me, for even a very short time, to be the *“bearer” of some positive news* of the type our region is in dire need of. In RCC, we have been working dedicatedly towards *giving a sense and tangible meaning to EU rules-based regional cooperation. For 76% of citizens regional cooperation helps their economies do better. A clear talk out of necessity feeling*.

Poor societies are mostly poor because of a lack of trust. The plans, laws and institutions that facilitate market transactions and long-run investment survive and work because of broad public buy-in, or stagnate thus hindering the overall economic development.

From last year’s Berlin Summit, where three agreements saw the endorsement light after a couple of years of standstill until today only 4 out of 6 WB economies finished the internal ratification procedures. Nevertheless, two examples are here today of our bridging over troubled waters, providing *concrete examples and models, glimpses and previews* and *piloting the progressive economic integration*. And demonstrating *concrete early entry tickets to EU’s single market*.

Following the *EU model-based elimination of intra-regional roaming costs*, what was last December still a series of operators’ signatures on a declaratory commitment

– is today a reality of *substantially slashed EU-WB roaming data costs* and *greatly facilitated communication*. 1 figure here can be enough: a Bosnian citizen while roaming in Greece a year ago would pay 9000 euros for 1 GB used, and today it will not exceed 17 euros.

Though one can easily take this landmark development now as a given or for granted, it is truly a *testament of hard work, coordination between institutions and business community, and the power of regional cooperation* transforming communication for the better, even in the face of complex challenges. Our *tireless work continues* to attain domestic price levels with extended geographic coverage, voice and sms included.

The *concerted efforts* we put towards *mutual recognition of a new set of professions*, which now amount to 7 in total, *fully based on EU rules* – is another *symbolic entry ticket to the single market* as it can be a *crucial step* towards *recognition of professional qualifications with the EU*. It remains *imperative* though that there are no *implementation and enforcement gaps* and that the signatures of the agreements are *promptly followed by entry into force* so that the benefits reach those intended for – our citizens.

Our work on joining the *single Euro payment area* and slashing the costs for cross-border payments, which remain *an unacceptably high barrier*, will also bring concrete benefits for consumers and businesses and boost cross-border commerce. These and other agendas we work on actually *bridge the pledges and commitments with the real life - through hard work*. The results which we are proud to report here today show what happens *when commitments kept meet real life*.

Dear all,

It is these type of *concrete, accelerated integration measures with EU's single market and policies*, but also many more, even *bolder, faster, more all-encompassing and more transformative* that our *region truly needs*.

Front-loading concrete *inclusion, phasing-in and integration* measures, along with *enhanced finances*, which we hope the *Growth Plan* is bringing - *is sorely needed in view of our development and convergence gaps and investment needs*. So that WB becomes *fully fit for integration*. We are already looking ahead in order to make such *quantitative and qualitative leap* with the new, rebooted CRM 2.0.

We need the same, if not even *stronger and more resolute push and support*, including more *sizable investments*, towards our *green transition and protecting and valorising* our *nature's beauties and potentials*.

Finding any *silver lining in such strained global and regional contexts* is all but impossible. We remain hopeful for the *reinvigorated discussions for completing the Union that is fit for enlargement and for building our larger European future together*. But also certain that a *human-centric Europe that is adapted, reformed and more, with our region firmly in its fold* – is the *best investment* in peace and security for the entire continent and beyond. On RCC's side, we remain eager and fully committed to continue to *work hard and deliver*, preparing the region to be part of the Union, as well as of every single positive development that comes as part of regional cooperation.