

**Welcoming address on behalf of Ingrid Deltenre, Director General of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) by David Lewis, Head of EBU Member Relations and Special Assistance**

**delivered at the International seminar ‘South East Europe 20 Years On: Transformation from State to Public Broadcasting’**

**Sarajevo, 14 November 2011**

Let me open by thanking the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), and its secretary general, Hido Biscevic, for hosting this important meeting today – and the European Commission for its support.

Ever since the RCC and the EBU began working together in early 2010, the RCC's regional approach has served us as an inspirational model of how to drive change.

Our two organizations believe it is essential that the national broadcasters of South East Europe need to be strengthened – financially, and from a legal and governance points of view – so that they can become truly independent and sustainable public service media.

Only when they are adequately funded and when their independence is protected will they be able to play their rightful, pivotal role in the societies that they serve.

In October last year, here in Sarajevo, we concretized our cooperation with the RCC and set in motion an action plan that will do exactly that. At that meeting, the participating government representatives, the regulators, civil societies and broadcasters agreed on a strategy that today – and I trust that our friends on the Commission will confirm this - is on the verge of being translated into action.

Another defining moment in our cooperation with the Commission was the Speak-Up! conference held in Brussels in May of this year. There the Commission explicitly identified

freedom of expression and the media as crucial touchstones for aspiring EU Enlargement countries.

Without EC commitment this project would have lacked a key driver, so we thank the European Commission, here represented, for hosting that important event.

The RCC is a good ally in the cause of public service media. So are the Council of Europe, OSCE, the European Parliament and others. All these organizations recognize the importance to any society of pluralistic, stable and independent media. And we are all committed to ensuring that such media can be enabled to exist and thrive in South East Europe.

This afternoon I shall be delivering for Ingrid Deltenre the keynote speech she intended to deliver herself, before the timetable changes, re-routings and delays forced her to cancel.

In the meantime, let me echo the welcomes already expressed to everyone who has come to this important meeting. And mention that the EBU is also represented by Marija Nemcic, who is a member of the EBU's Executive Board. And by our distinguished former Vice-President, Boris Bergant.

Thank you!