



STABILITY PACT FOR SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

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Stability Pact for South East Europe
OSCE Ministerial
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(check against delivery)

Thank you Mr. Chairman:

I am pleased to address you today on the Stability Pact's activity in South East Europe and on its close collaboration with the OSCE, speaking on behalf of Special Coordinator Erhard Busek.

This is a particularly notable intervention for me, given that the Stability Pact will soon conclude its work. In February 2008, the Regional Cooperation Council (the RCC), with a secretariat in Sarajevo, will take its place at the head of South East Europe's regional cooperation agenda, which will move forward on the basis of true regional leadership and ownership.

Since 1999, the Stability Pact has working under the political auspices of the OSCE. As such, it has contributed to the OSCE's progress in implementing a broad concept of security. This has involved many dimensions - military and civilian, economic and environmental, democratization and human rights.

One particular highlight has been the Ohrid Border Process, by which OSCE, NATO, the EU, and the Stability Pact worked with key partners in the region as they demilitarized their borders. This fundamental achievement has great value and certainly contributes to regional stability today.

More generally, we are happy that the importance of regional cooperation – working together to address joint problems - is much better understood today than a few years ago. Such cooperation is now clearly seen as essential to the process of EU and Euro-Atlantic integration and is fully consistent with the precepts of the OSCE.

In this spirit, South East Europe has made clear progress on all fronts in the past year. EU and Euro-Atlantic integration have progressed notably in all countries.

We are now in a phase where past decisions on regional cooperation demand implementation – a more workman-like phase but no less a challenge. The RCC, Secretary General Ambassador Hido Bisevic and the RCC Secretariat will have the

responsibility of sustaining the present momentum, and equally important, addressing the new challenges that are sure to arise. Our joint work with Ambassador Biscevic gives us every confidence that they will succeed in this important task.

This valedictory presentation in this forum seeks to make several fundamental points.

First, South East Europe, acting as a region under the political umbrella of the South East European Cooperation Process, the SEECP, deserves positive recognition for the steps it has taken, and for the resources and personnel it has committed to the process of establishing the RCC and its Secretariat as the region's focal point for cooperation.

Putting this focal point and framework in place during 2007 required working to a very tight schedule, and resolving a number of important issues collectively. Having worked closely with the region in this process, I must praise our colleagues from the region for their commitment, energy, and vision in taking this challenge on and in meeting every deadline on time and fully in substance.

Second, the region has defined the key priorities of the RCC, namely Economic and Social Development, Infrastructure, Justice and Home Affairs, Security co-operation, Building Human Capital; as well as Parliamentary Co-operation as an overarching theme.

These areas will be key in the future and they track well with the OSCE program. I trust that the RCC and Secretary General Biscevic will be accepted as full partners to the OSCE in its work in the region, and that he will be welcomed to this annual meeting just as Dr. Busek and I have been over the course of recent years.

Third, the regional cooperation program achieved by South East Europe by working with the Stability Pact stands out as a credible – and successful – model for regional cooperation approaches elsewhere in the area of the OSCE.

Whether such cooperation occurs with regard to democratization, economic development, or in the security sector, South East Europe's strategy, range of working groups and initiatives, and cross-initiative consistency offers much to other regions where conflict has existed or perhaps still threatens, where economic development demands true regional cooperation and fundamental economic agreements with impact, and where the twin cancers of corruption and organized crime sap the energy and prospects of societies seeking to achieve a high standard of living and political freedom in the best spirit of OSCE principles.

Fourth, South East Europe still confronts daunting challenges over the weeks and months ahead. The RCC, working with the OSCE and other significant international actors, can play a positive role in moving the region forward. Democracy is flourishing, but particular issues remain. We all need to pull together so that solutions – local and regional – reinforce stability and create a more dynamic basis for economic growth and development and for true progress in developing institutions supporting the rule of law.

Understandably, there has been much discussion of Kosovo during this conference. Here I would simply point to the need to ensure that Kosovo remains fully integrated into the region, as it has been through UNMIK/Kosovo's participation in so many Stability Pact-related initiatives, including the CEFTA free trade agreement and the regional energy treaty. It is very important that these fundamental cooperative frameworks continue to develop in the coming months regardless of developments in Kosovo.

Similarly I would highlight the unfinished work related to migration and refugee returns, an issue of great importance to the OSCE agenda in the region. Previous speakers from the region have recognized this need.

Lastly, and to close, I trust the OSCE institutions and field missions will work closely with our new colleagues from the RCC and its Secretariat.

In the past, the Stability Pact's partnership was truly one based on comparative advantages: we brought a regional approach and issue-specific expertise; OSCE Missions provide country-specific knowledge and a focused presence on the ground. This approach has had a clear impact and has produced success. I hope this model will continue to generate results, as the RCC steps in for the Stability Pact.

So, on behalf of Dr. Busek and all working within the framework of the Stability Pact, let me express our appreciation to the Spanish Chairmanship for its steady support and excellent hospitality this week. Let me also say that we look forward to working with the incoming Finnish Chairmanship in Office next year as we pass the baton to the Regional Cooperation Council.

As we conclude our work at the Stability Pact, we look back with satisfaction to a record of very successful cooperation with the OSCE, to having made a real contribution to South East Europe's integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures, and to having helped to improve the region's economic, political and social prospects.

And we look forward to the good work to come, by the OSCE and the RCC, and to their future partnership in areas of mutual interest and concern.

Thank you.