



Overview of Key Activities of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat

June 2009

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Annual Meeting of the Regional Cooperation Council held on 4 June 2009 in Chisinau

The first Annual Meeting of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) was held in Chisinau on 4 June 2009. The Meeting, co-hosted by the Moldovan Chairmanship-in-Office (CiO) of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), discussed regional cooperation in South East Europe over the past year, results achieved in the first year of the RCC operation, and challenges ahead, including the ways of addressing the effects of the current global economic crisis in South East Europe. The Annual Meeting of the RCC endorsed the RCC Secretary General's Annual Report on regional co-operation in South East Europe and the Strategic Work Programme of the RCC for period 2009 - 2010.

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SEECP Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Summit of Heads of State and Government were held in Chisinau on 4 and 5 June 2009

Secretary General of the RCC Hido Bišćević participated in the SEECP Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and SEECP Meeting of Heads of State and Government which were respectively held on 4 and 5 June 2009 in Chisinau within the framework of the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova. The SEECP Summit adopted the Chisinau Declaration and the Joint Statement expressing full support to the work of the RCC and its Secretary General, calling upon him to continue achieving the defined regional priorities and objectives. The Heads of State and Government of the SEECP Participating States endorsed the 2009-2010 RCC Strategic Work Programme and the Annual Report of the RCC Secretary General. They simultaneously called upon the RCC to establish a high-level expert panel to stimulate in-depth discussion on economic and financial measures in response to the economic crisis. The Summit participants pledged partnership for cooperation, development, prosperity, European integration, and strengthening of the rule of law. They reaffirmed that the accession to the EU remains key regional goal.

Workshop “Energy Community and Regional Security”, co-organized by the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia and the RCC Secretariat, with support of the Energy Community Secretariat, held in Belgrade on 8 June 2009

The Workshop focused on security of energy supplies and the role of Energy Community, climate change and national security, discussing the Energy Community Treaty as a legal basis, market developments within the Energy Community, investments, energy efficiency, renewable energy sources and social dimensions of the Energy Community. The participants agreed on major challenges to be addressed in the energy sector: reaching cost-reflective energy tariffs to support new investments and energy efficiency measures, keeping regional approach, and promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy sources as the major tools to reach sustainable economic growth in the region. The workshop targeted members of parliament and parliamentary expert staff dealing with energy issues. It was the first in a series of events organized on the basis of the conclusions of the regional workshop “Parliaments – Support to Harmonized Energy Reforms in South East Europe”, held in Sarajevo on 15 December 2008, in order to facilitate the lawmaking process and increase the ability of parliaments to oversee their governments in energy reform process.

Multi-beneficiary Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) Coordination Meeting held in Zagreb on 9 and 10 June 2009

RCC Secretary General Hido Bišćević, RCC Deputy Secretary General and Head of Expert Pool Jelica Minić and senior experts of the RCC Secretariat participated in the Multi-beneficiary IPA Coordination Meeting that was held in Zagreb on 9 and 10 June 2009. The main issues on the agenda were: Multi-beneficiary IPA Programming 2009 – 2010 status and planning, Presentation of the IPA Multi-beneficiary Programming Guide – Vision for the future Multi-beneficiary IPA 2011-2013, Discussions on the Preliminary Project Ideas for the Multi-beneficiary IPA Program 2010, Priority sectors for 2011-2013 identification and Guidelines for further sectoral Working groups – core Working group members and reference group members identified.

RCC Secretary General Hido Bišćević presented the results of the SEECF Summit, developments in regional cooperation in South East Europe and the Multi-beneficiary IPA Programme. He emphasized the necessity of all-inclusiveness of cooperation in all fields and the strategic role of the IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme. Mr Bišćević also stressed that there was a pressing need for socioeconomic development, economic recovery and the political issues to be addressed in cooperation. Mr Bišćević stated that a more coordinated and consolidated approach on national level was needed and the regional platform must be used better. The Secretary General added that the role of the RCC should be as a key interlocutor for the EU for the development of South East Europe. The political situation still being complex in the region, networking and small steps are important, and support of the Commission and other partners is essential. Large scale trans-regional projects on energy, infrastructure, transport and human capital are today even more relevant.

Regional Coordination Meeting held in Trieste on 12 June 2009

The eighth Coordination Meeting of Regional Organisations was held on 12 June 2009 at the headquarters of the Central European Initiative (CEI) – Executive Secretariat in Trieste. The meeting was attended by representatives of secretariats of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII), the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), the CEI, the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the RCC and the SEECP. A representative of the European Commission was also present at the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to provide a platform not only for discussing and comparing activities with a view to avoiding overlapping and duplication, but also for seeking synergies between regional initiatives and organizations and their secretariats, as well as for preparing the ground for joint projects and activities in the areas of common interest. The participants agreed to continue with the exchange of agendas and planned activities with the aim to harmonize events and activities on all levels. It was agreed that next meeting was going to be held in June or July 2010 in Ancona in the organization of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative Secretariat.

RCC Secretariat hosted a meeting on strengthening social dialogue in South East Europe in Sarajevo on 22 June 2009

A regional meeting on strengthening social dialogue in South East Europe took place at the premises of the RCC Secretariat in Sarajevo on 22 June 2009. The event was co-organized by the RCC Secretariat and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation's Regional Project on Labour Relations and Social Dialogue in South East Europe. The meeting "Identifying Common Interests in Times of Financial Crisis", aimed at addressing negative consequences of the current economic crisis on jobs and business activities in South East Europe through better coordination and action at the regional level. It brought together representatives of trade union and employers organizations from South East Europe, while its conclusions reflected the priorities and needs of both the workers and the employers through consensus and mutual understanding. It also provided an opportunity for sharing ideas and good practices by addressing practical ways to develop effective social dialogue on policies and activities, ensuring the sustainability of such efforts.

RCC Secretariat held a presentation on its mission, priorities and activities to European and Euro-Atlantic institutions in Brussels on 23 June 2009

The presentation's aim was to bring the RCC work closer to a wider circle of Brussels officials, diplomatic representatives, business sector, civil society and the media, inform all relevant actors of RCC's regional cooperation efforts in South East Europe and receive feedback from regional stakeholders and international donors on their interests and priorities. The participants were welcomed by RCC Secretary General, Hido Bišćević, and Head of the Brussels Liaison Office, Stanislav Daskalov. More detailed presentations were delivered by Deputy Secretary General and Head of Expert Pool, Jelica Minić, as well as experts on economic and social development,

infrastructure and energy, justice and home affairs, security cooperation, building human capital, and parliamentary cooperation. The RCC experts presented the organization's achievements and plans, and elaborated on how the advancement of the RCC members from South East Europe on the European and Euro-Atlantic integration path increased potentials and readiness for regional cooperation.

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South East European Employment and Social Policy Network held its first meeting under RCC umbrella in Sarajevo on 23 June 2009

The RCC Secretariat hosted for the first time under its umbrella a meeting of the Employment and Social Policy Network of South East Europe in its premises in Sarajevo on 23 June 2009. The goal of the meeting was to contribute to the design, monitoring and evaluation of national employment and social policies through knowledge sharing. It was aimed at developing political and technical capacity required to promote regional employment and social agenda, and at providing a tripartite dialogue forum on employment and labour issues. The meeting was organized together with the International Labour Organization (ILO), and supported by the European Commission, the Council of Europe, and the Government of the Kingdom of Belgium. The participants, including representatives of relevant ministries and other bodies of public administration responsible for employment policies and national employment agencies in South East Europe, worked to develop a programme of future Network action. The South East Europe Employment and Social Policy Network is intended to act as a permanent regional working-level cooperation mechanism for sharing, disseminating, and managing knowledge and good practices in the realm of employment policy.

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RCC Secretary General Hido Bišćević met Timo Summa, Director, Regional Programmes, DG Enlargement, European Commission in Brussels on 23 June 2009

The meeting focused on the forthcoming cooperation between the European Commission and the RCC Secretariat, especially with regard to prospects after the first year of the operational ability of the RCC and the results of the Annual Meeting of the RCC. Mr. Bišćević and Mr. Summa exchanged views on the state of preparation of the Conference devoted to the Western Balkans to be jointly organized by the Swedish EU Presidency, European Commission with the participation of the RCC, which will take place in Brussels on 9 December 2009. The RCC Secretary General also informed that the RCC had been mandated by the SEECP Summit to establish a high-level expert panel aimed at stimulating in-depth discussions on economic and financial measures in response to the crisis by acting in a coordinated manner at the regional level and in consultation with the EU institutions and other international partners. He also informed that the Chisinau Declaration extended support to the RCC and the Annual Report of the RCC Secretary General detailing the results and achievements in the past year as well as to its future role and activities as laid out in the Strategic Work Programme of the RCC for period 2009 – 2010. Director Summa reiterated the support of the European Commission to the RCC and its intention to remain committed to regional cooperation in South East Europe through the

RCC. He invited the RCC Secretariat to prepare a platform outlining areas in which the RCC can add value with regard to regional cooperation and which would serve as a basis for the future involvement of the European Commission.

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RCC Secretary General Hido Bišćević participated in International Conference “Are the EU and the Balkans drifting apart?” in Berlin on 29 June 2009

The International Conference on the integration of the Western Balkans into the EU, organized by Friedrich Ebert Foundation discussed the current state of affairs in the process of European integration of the Western Balkans. RCC Secretary General Hido Bišćević, who was one of the speakers at the conference, pointed out that although all the countries of the Western Balkans had come to anchor in Brussels, the stagnation was noticeable. He added that the atmosphere of delay prevailed in which the Union needed more time to develop new mechanisms for functioning of the large number of its members. He went on to say that the Western Balkans should not be forgotten, left or dismissed for some other time. Europe had many failures in the Western Balkans and the territory of the former Yugoslavia in 1990's. He stressed that today we had to live with the consequences of those failures adding that it would be fatal if failure occurred once again.

Sarajevo, 6 July 2009