

## **Overview of the key activities of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat**

**JULY – AUGUST 2009**

**1.**

**RCC Secretary General participated at Croatia Summit in Dubrovnik on 9-10 July 2009**

Secretary General Biscevic contributed to the discussion at the panel “Energy Landscape in Europe: A New Platform for Cooperation” giving an overview of the situation in South East Europe with the emphasis on the possibilities for further development of the regional energy infrastructure that would provide a strong boost to the accelerated economic development. Secretary General highlighted energy insufficiency and supply variability as outstanding issues and presented a number of concrete ideas like resource pooling, energy exchange and joint storage facilities to address them. He explained the significance of enhanced coordination among all actors in tackling regional problems and underlined the important role of the RCC and its partners in this context informing the participants on the conference on regional development that is going to take place in December 2009 in Brussels co-organised by the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU and the European Commission.

**2.**

**First preparatory meeting on the establishing of the South East European Firefighting Regional Centre (SEEFREC) took place in Sarajevo on 15-16 July 2009**

The first preparatory meeting on the establishment of the South East European Firefighting Regional Centre (SEEFREC) was held at the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat in Sarajevo on 15-16 July 2009. Representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, the World Bank, the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR), the European Commission, the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South Eastern Europe (DPPI SEE) and the RCC Secretariat, discussed operational aspects of the SEEFREC establishment and agreed on the future steps. They elaborated on the possible structure, role and mandate of civil protection in disaster risk reduction in South East Europe and invited other RCC members from the region to join SEEFREC. The next preparatory meeting, to be hosted by Montenegro and prepared jointly with the RCC Secretariat in October 2009, will gather heads of national fire disaster management institutions from South East Europe and relevant international partners in order to finalize terms of reference for a comprehensive feasibility study on fire disasters and management needs in South East Europe. The World Bank and the UN/ISDR confirmed their readiness to seek financial support for the preparation of the feasibility study and the workshops related to the establishment of SEEFREC.

### 3.

#### **RCC Secretary General held talks with senior officials in the Department of State of the United States of America and the World Bank in Washington on 21 July 2009**

Secretary General Biscevic informed Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia Stuart Jones and other United States officials on the current challenges facing South East Europe, underlining the strategic importance of keeping the EU enlargement process open as well as the importance of the EU and international support to regional economic, infrastructure and social development, as a guarantee to stability and prosperity of the region. The United States officials confirmed the continuation of strong support to the RCC as the key partner in the context of the development and strengthening of regional cooperation in South East Europe. The interlocutors agreed that the RCC should particularly focus on bringing South East Europe together around development projects and stressed the need to ensure all-inclusiveness as a ground rule for the RCC, as well as to find a permanent solution to the issue of participation of all members within the RCC framework.

The RCC Secretary General also held talks with World Bank Vice President Shigeo Katsu and other officials. He warned that the world economic crisis could have serious impact on national economies in South East Europe and called for stronger engagement of the international financial institutions in designing and implementing adequate regional and national recovery programmes to counter its effects. Secretary General Biscevic thanked for the strong World Bank support to the RCC in its formative year, especially on projects to establish the SEEFREC and the Southeast and Central European Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (SECE-CRIF), which are expected to be finalized in a near future. He also invited the Bank to support the development of the Regional Strategy for Research and Development in the Western Balkans, which is being developed under RCC auspices. Vice President Katsu stressed that the World Bank remains an important RCC partner in promoting development in South East Europe to the benefit of its people.

### 4.

#### **RCC Deputy Secretary General/Head of Expert Pool participated at the Bled Strategic Forum on 30 and 31 August 2009**

Deputy Secretary General of the RCC and Head of Expert Pool in the RCC Secretariat, Ms. Jelica Minic, participated at this year's Bled Strategic Forum "The Politics of Economic Crisis: Redefining Economic and Geopolitical Landscapes in Europe and Eurasia". The Forum gathered a number of participants from political and economic circles as well as academia. Deputy Secretary General Minic participated in the panel "The Strengthening of Economic Integration of the Western Balkans on the Way to Recovery", where she, *inter alia*, presented the activities of the RCC in the area of economic and social development focused in particular on the countering adverse effects of current economic crisis in South East Europe at the regional level. The Bled Strategic Forum was also attended by the Head of the RCC Secretariat's Liaison Office in Brussels, Mr. Stanislav Daskalov.