



**ADDRESS OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE REGIONAL
COOPERATION COUNCIL (RCC), MR. GORAN SVILANOVIC**

5th RCC ANNIVERSARY

Panel discussion:

***“FIVE YEARS OF REGIONAL COOPERATION COUNCIL: BUILDING ON
FOUNDATIONS AND EMBRACING NEW CHALLENGES”***

Sarajevo, 27 February 2013

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Distinguished guests,

I am pleased to welcome you all in Sarajevo today to mark together with you the fifth anniversary of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). Your presence motivates us to keep working towards new, successful anniversaries in the future as well.

Over the last five years of the RCC existence, we saw important steps forward in connecting the region: joint infrastructural projects, constant increase of the level of cultural exchange, cooperation in the fields of justice, home affairs, security, education, science, health care, media. And we all know that the improvement of cooperation, of economic and cultural bonds also leads towards economic growth.

The Regional Cooperation Council has played an important role in this process, and will continue to do so. We will continue to work on creating an environment where, with respect to mutual differences, we will be able to adjust our own interests to those of our neighbours, and profit from that synergy. We find it important to ensure all-inclusiveness in our activities, to show that the region is able to take responsibility for its own future and create conditions for overall progress in the spirit of tolerance and cooperation. We find it important to foster regional stability for the sake of citizens in our region and the quality of their lives. We believe that by advancing European and Euro-Atlantic integration we will reach that goal faster.

Much has been achieved. The RCC has become a rallying point for decisive action by all the stakeholders involved and evolved towards a focused and matured actor persistently promoting and strengthening regional cooperation.

Let me point out to few of the most important results achieved: Taking over of the management of the South East Europe Investment Committee from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and its repositioning as the development vehicle for South East Europe 2020 (SEE 2020) strategy; establishment of Sustainable Energy Development Regional Initiative Task Force; initiating and adopting the 2011-2013 Regional Strategic Document in Justice and Home Affairs, the Action Plan for its implementation, and Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism to measure the progress achieved; creating regional mechanism of cooperation among Chiefs of Military Intelligence and Heads of National Security Authorities; developing the Regional Strategy for Research and Development for Innovation for the Western Balkans and setting up the RCC Task Force on Culture and Society; assisting the establishment of the European Association of Public Service Media in SEE as a non-profit professional body of public broadcasters.

By now, we have a solid foundation, an anchor of a new vision, but we have to look ahead, into the future.

So, what is it that you can expect from the RCC in the future?

For several years already, the Regional Cooperation Council has paved the road for the SEE 2020 development strategy. We have been actively working on it since November last year, when ministers of economy from the region adopted the strategy's main targets. Our basic goal is to improve living conditions in our region and bring back in the region's focus competitiveness and development of each country and the entire region. In that sense, this document leans on the EU strategy *Europe 2020*.

We are in the midst of a large economic and financial crisis, which made lives of the poorest impossible and practically destroyed the middle class. The majority is unemployed. Those who do have jobs, work for low salaries with constant fear of unemployment. SEE 2020 is focused on turning over the present economic stagnation and downfall, and fully concentrated on economic and social growth. Ministers of economy from the region gave green light to the strategy development and set goals they want to achieve together. We are here to do everything we can to help them be successful in achieving these goals.

Let me mention the most important ones: employment growth from 40% to 45%, increase in mutual trade by 230%, the rise of the region's GDP from the current 38% to 46% of the EU average. In order to make this happen, production, trade, investments and education must be improved, and our national governments must be far more efficient than they are nowadays.

We want to create a harmonised framework in the regional cooperation process, where all participants have clear roles and responsibilities in achieving the agreed goals. This is why all relevant regional organisations participate in the strategy development under

RCC auspices, such as CEFTA. Of course, national institutions have a key role: ministries of economy, education, employment, health care, justice, environmental protection, culture, relevant agencies. International organisations, such as the European Union, the OECD, the Council of Europe, and the World Bank will also provide support. The ministers of economy are expected to adopt the strategy in November 2013.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The countries of the region are aware of the advantages of regional cooperation and the unavoidable and necessary links between and among them. Regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations are also consisting parts of the EU Stabilisation and Accession Agreement signed by countries aspiring to become EU members. Of course, as such, it is an important membership precondition, which is evaluated through regular European Commission's progress reports. The RCC contributes to preparing these reports and evaluating the progress of the countries in the accession process.

In this EU context, we want to achieve a maximum level of consideration for the region's interests in designing the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) 2, as the key EU financial pre-accession support mechanism. We want the region's voice to be heard. The RCC will be consulted in the process of making decisions about the use of these funds at the regional level. I think this is a practical way to maintain EU integration dynamics, enhancing at the same time the region's stability. This also testifies to the EU's permanent support and commitment to the inclusion of the entire Balkans, just like it was decided ten years ago in Thessaloniki.

Dear guests,

I express my sincere gratitude to governments, private sector, academia, civil society and media, in helping us advance the RCC mission of promoting mutual cooperation and European and Euro-Atlantic integration of South East Europe in order to inspire development in the region to the benefit of its people.

I thank all the RCC participants, EU institutions and international partners for the support given in making it possible for officials and specialists from countries in the region to meet and discuss subjects of common interest and define joint regional cooperation goals under this framework of the Regional Cooperation Council.

Finally, I want to thank the staff of the RCC Secretariat for the hard work, professional knowledge and expertise in fulfilling the RCC mission.

I hope that in the course of my mandate the RCC will continue to advance vigorously cooperation in South East Europe, and in this I ask for your support.

Thank you.