



Welcome address by the RCC Secretary General Hido Biscevic

**at the Sarajevo Conference on Higher Education -
*Building Capacity for Change in the Western Balkans***

30-31 October 2009

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Let me start by welcoming the representatives of the ministries of education from the RCC members from the Western Balkans, rectors, vice rectors and professors from the universities in the region, higher education authorities from EU, representatives of respective European organisations and agencies involved in creation of EU policy in higher education, as well as individual European and regional experts;
- I want to thank the Universities from Sarajevo, Zagreb and Novi Sad for co-organising the Conference. I express gratitude to other sponsors (ERI SEE, SPARK). Special thanks go to Professor Ladislav Novak, initiator and *perpetuum mobile* of the Novi Sad Initiative and today's Sarajevo Conference on Higher Education;
- This is the third in a series of biannual conferences on higher education, built on the foundations laid by the first conference in Novi Sad and the second one in Dubrovnik, aiming to support institutional reform in higher education systems in the Western Balkans region;
- To reach the goals of the Lisbon Agenda, countries of the region have embarked upon a series of initiatives in the areas of research and education. These efforts require participation of a wide range of players. The universities are certainly among the key playmakers. They have a particularly important role, because of their twofold mission - a traditional vocation of teaching and research and their increasing role in the complex process of innovation. The creation of knowledge based

societies is a source of opportunities and a major challenge, not only for the universities, but for the societies in the region in general;

- Sharing the experience of higher education sector, within the region and beyond, we are exploring possibilities and optimal models for convergence of the regional systems to the European Higher Education Area and the European Union policy in higher education;
- I am confident that the Sarajevo Conference *Building Capacity for Change in the Western Balkans* will provide a platform for exchange of relevant experience in selected topics including:
 - EU Policy in Higher Education concerning the Institutional Reform;
 - A View on European and Regional Higher Education Area in the new decade;
 - Professionalization of public management of higher education;
 - Discussion on the modalities and prerequisites for acceleration of institutional reform in the higher education in the region;
 - Discussion on the modalities for institutionalised cooperation in higher education within the Western Balkans region through EU platforms;
- I wish you all a productive work and a successful conference.