



### **Conclusions of the final meeting of the Regional Table of the Stability Pact**

The final meeting of the Regional Table of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe took place together with the inaugural meeting of the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC) under the joint chairmanship of Special Co-ordinator Erhard Busek and Secretary General Hido Biscevic on 27 February 2008 in Sofia. The main objective of the meeting was to formally hand over responsibility for regional co-operation in South Eastern Europe from the Stability Pact to the RCC.

Participants praised the significant progress made by the Stability Pact in setting up the RCC and observed that the timelines set out at the Belgrade and Zagreb Regional Table meetings were fully met and that major efforts were undertaken to ensure the successful and timely establishment of the RCC.

The Table underlined the key role played by the South East European Co-operation Process (SEECF) in the transition from the Stability Pact to the RCC, and the overall importance of the SEECF relationship with the RCC and recalled the important decisions taken at the SEECF Zagreb Summit on 11 May 2007.

The Table noted that the Stability Pact through its activities since 1999 has significantly contributed to the stabilisation of South Eastern Europe, including contributions to the improvement of the overall socio-economic situation and to the better security environment in the region. It has also significantly promoted the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of South Eastern European countries.

The Table took note of the final Report on Regional Ownership and Streamlining of the Stability Pact Task Forces and Initiatives that outlined the state of play in the different activity areas and acknowledged the increasing degree of ownership and self-sufficiency achieved in many Task Forces and Initiatives over the past years.

Participants remarked that regional co-operation is today fully accepted as an important instrument to enhance political stability, economic growth and security, and as a prerequisite for progressing on the path to the EU. The Table noted that the importance of regional co-operation is widely recognised by both South East European countries and international partners, which have increasingly devised regional strategies and have supported the establishment of the RCC.

The Table stressed that the RCC will build upon the legacy of the Stability Pact. The RCC will play a crucial role in consolidating achievements to date and in supporting South East European countries in advancing progress in the different areas of co-operation. Participants underlined that the RCC will continue in the path of the Stability Pact and will focus on promoting and supporting regional co-operation in South Eastern Europe, and in sustaining European integration of the region. Participants furthermore noted that the RCC will also provide a platform for enhancing further Euro-Atlantic integration of South Eastern Europe and work as an important transatlantic framework.

Participants noted that at this stage regional leadership and ownership are critical for regional co-operation processes to advance and be sustainable in the medium and long term. Participants also underlined that continued international partnership is equally crucial for success and noted that the RCC will provide the framework for increased ownership and leadership by South East European countries by enhancing the operational capacities

of the SEECP through its Secretariat and task forces, and will also provide a forum for the continued involvement of the donor community.

The Table highlighted that the real challenge for South Eastern Europe now lies in implementing the regional co-operation agenda. This requires significant political, financial and human resources to ensure that the economic and social benefits inherent in the various regional co-operation processes will be realised and visible to South East European citizens.

Participants thanked the Bulgarian SEECP Chairmanship in Office (CiO) for preparing and hosting the Regional Table and the RCC inaugural meeting back to back with the SEECP Meeting of Foreign Ministers. They also expressed appreciation to the Bulgarian SEECP CiO for its hard work and close co-operation with all parties in the build-up of the RCC, notably in the conclusion and signing of the Agreement on the host country arrangements for the Secretariat of the RCC between the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the governments of the other SEECP participating states and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo on behalf of Kosovo in accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.

The Table highlighted the importance of the incoming Moldovan SEECP CiO, whose leadership in regional co-operation will play a pivotal role in the first year of the RCC.

The Table agreed that the Stability Pact Secretariat in Brussels should overlap with the RCC Secretariat for a short transition period until the end of June 2008, to complete a comprehensive hand over of its responsibilities and competencies to the new staff of the RCC and to provide training and advice to RCC staff in the agreed priority areas of the RCC.

Participants agreed that the archives of the Office of the Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact will be handed over to the University of Graz in Austria for future research purposes. Digital copies of all relevant documents will be made available to the RCC Secretariat. The financial and administrative documents of the Stability Pact will be transferred to the RCC Liaison Office in Brussels in order to ensure their availability in line with relevant financial and legal regulations. The relevant rules governing data protection will be applied to all transfers of documentation and data.

Participants thanked Special Co-ordinator Erhard Busek and his predecessor Bodo Hombach, the successive Chairs of the three Working Tables, the staff of the Stability Pact Secretariat since 1999 and all those who were involved in different task forces, processes and initiatives during the past nine years for their dedication and contribution to regional co-operation in South Eastern Europe.