Report
CHAIRMANSHIP-IN-OFFICE OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA
SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN COOPERATION PROCESS (SEECP)

2008 - 2009

Chișinău 2009
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Priorities of the SEECP
Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova

1. Regional cooperation is one of the priorities of the foreign policy of the Republic of Moldova.

2. The Republic of Moldova is an active participant and member of the regional organizations, processes and initiatives in South Eastern and Central Europe, in Black Sea region and Eastern dimension through GUAM and TRACECA. In mean time, starting with the year 2000, participates and is actively involved in the South East European initiatives in the field of Mass Media, local democracy and trans-border cooperation, parliamentary cooperation, youth and education, gender issues, trade and investments, energy and regional infrastructure, social cohesion, international society, fighting corruption and organized crime, migration, asylum and refugees, disaster preparedness and prevention and others.

3. The European integration is the main driving force of the reforms and development of the countries in the region. At the same time, the regional cooperation represents an important complementary mechanism aimed at contributing to the process of advancement of the countries from region on their path to the EU, development in accordance with the EU standards as well as access to the European liberties.

4. The process of advancement to the EU depends on the individual performance and merits of each country. Therefore, the Republic of Moldova as Chairman to the SEECP, will focus in its discussions with the EU on the intensification of the bilateral dialogue of the European Union with the countries of the region. In this sense, during the Chairmanship, the Republic of Moldova will hold SEECP – EU consultations.

5. The Republic of Moldova supported very much and appreciates the establishment of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), as a regional cooperation mechanism. Given the fact that RCC establishment represents a process coming from the region and not only from outside, is a great achievement, which has to be consolidated through good implementation of concrete projects, especially in the priority areas of cooperation.

6. Throughout the chairmanship, the Republic of Moldova will strengthen the cooperation with the RCC, giving the necessary political support in the implementation of the strategic working plan of the activities.

7. We support the advancement of the SEECP role as a “united voice” of the region and supreme political forum of the South East Europe. The atmosphere and quality of discussions and decisions in the framework of SEECP have essentially contributed to its advancement and rapid development, ensuring thus the fulfillment of the generally recognized objectives and aims.
8. Within the SEECP Chairmanship, the Republic of Moldova will concentrate on the implementation of the decisions of the Summit held in Zagreb on May 11th 2007, Pomorie Summit 2008, Regional Table of the Stability Pact held in Zagreb May 10 2007, as well as of other decisions regarding the establishment of the Regional Cooperation Council and its good functioning.

9. The Republic of Moldova will also concentrate on the following domains of cooperation: European integration, economic development, trade and investments, energy and regional infrastructure, regional security, fighting corruption and organized crime, building human capital, parliamentary cooperation.

Objectives

- Development of the SEECP — EU dialogue and consolidating the European perspective of the South East European states;
- Consolidation of the institutional dialogue with the European Commission and EU institutions;
- Support for the European aspirations of the participating states regarding the adherence to the EU;
- Supporting the European aspirations of the participating states in their perspective to adhere to the EU;
- Strengthening the cooperation and good neighborly relations between the participating states;
- Promotion of democratic values and European standards as a firm development mechanism of the entire region;
- Supporting and strengthening the peace and economic development in the region with the aim of ensuring stability, security and prosperity in South East Europe;
- Consolidation and promotion of the SEECP on the international arena, as a “united voice” of the region and reliable partner with the aim of fulfilling the overall objectives of the international community;
- Maintenance and development of the dialogue between the SEECP participating states and with the international partners with the aim of promoting democratic reforms and advancement in the fields of common interest;
- Consolidation of the efficiency of the regional processes and initiatives in cooperation with the SEECP participating states, EU, RCC members, as well as with the donor states and relevant international organizations;
- Strengthening the cooperation with the Secretary General and the Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat;
- Cooperation with the Regional Cooperation Council and with the processes, initiatives and regional organizations with the aim of strengthening cooperation, stability and development in South East Europe;
- Adjustment of the functional competences and of the SEECP activities, taking into account the launch of the Regional Cooperation Council and the establishment of the domains of common interest of the participating states;
- Coordination with the participating states of the SEECP activities agenda, taking into account the political priorities of the region in this period;
- Monitoring the implementation of the decisions and signed or adopted agreements within the SEECP.
International Conference
“Regional Cooperation - Opportunities, Challenges and Synergy”
17 June 2008, Chişinău

Meeting of the Heads of the SEECP Supreme Audit Institutions
“South East Europe SAIs: Developments and Prospects”.
International Conference “Ways to Improve SAIs Activity within the European Vector Framework: Experience and Practices of the South East European SAIs”
18-20 September 2008, Chişinău

International Conference
for the Central and Eastern Europe, Balkans, Caucasus and Baltic States
“Science and Education Policies”
19 September 2008, Chişinău

Meeting of the SEECP Committee of Political Directors and Joint Meeting of the SEECP Committee of Political Directors and Directors Responsible for EU Affairs
26 September 2008, Chişinău

The XIIth Meeting of the Steering Group of the Regional Anticorruption Initiative (RAI)
31 September 2008, Chişinău

Meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs
31 October 2008, Chişinău

Meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Health
7 November 2008, Chişinău

Program and
Informal Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the SEECP
30 January 2009, Chişinău

Meeting of the Committee of the SEECP Political Directors
7 April 2009, Chişinău

Meeting of the Heads of Consular Services of the SEECP participating states
24 April 2009, Chişinău

Meeting of the SEECP Authorities for Competition Protection
21-22 May 2009, Chişinău

Meeting of the Committee of the SEECP Political Directors
2-3 June 2009, Chişinău

RCC Annual Meeting
4 June 2009, Chişinău

Meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Foreign Affairs
3-4 June 2009, Chişinău

Summit of the SEECP Heads of State and Government
4-5 June 2009, Chişinău
In accordance with the priorities, objectives and the Program of the Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova to the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), during 2008 - 2009, the Moldovan Chairmanship organized a series of political and sectoral meetings and activities. A summary description and results of the respective events are presented below.

International Conference “Regional Cooperation – Opportunities, Challenges and Synergy”

On 17 June 2008, the Republic of Moldova hosted the International Conference “Regional Cooperation – Opportunities, Challenges and Synergy”.

The main objective of the Conference was expressed in the necessity of coordinating the objectives and activities of the regional arrangements through efficient mechanisms of collaboration and implementation of joint projects, for the benefit of the member states. In this context, the Conference aimed to discuss the process of avoiding overlapping and ensuring the regional activities in two main ways: political and sectoral approaches in regional cooperation.

Taking into account the significant importance of the regional cooperation, the Conference highlighted the necessity to make use of the regional cooperation framework as an effective mechanism and framework for the enhancement of political dialogue among the participating countries, regional arrangements and international community, which represents, at the same time, a prerequisite for ensuring a continuous development of the parties involved.

Furthermore, as a driving force for the development of the countries involved into regional cooperation process, European integration and alignment to the European standards, values and principles remains the main common objective of the states, contributing to the implementation of the necessary domestic reforms in all areas of activity, based on rule of law and democratic principles. The Chisinau Conference highlighted the efficiency of the regional cooperation in the advancement process towards the EU, which can not be perceived to any further extent as separated from the European aspirations and perspectives of the countries which share common values. Thus, taking into account the consolidation of the regional cooperation process in the framework of the European aspiration of the countries involved, all participants agreed on and highlighted the necessity to keep the regional cooperation on the EU Agenda, the present and future EU Presidencies having a special role in this sense.

Following the Conference, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova has elaborated the Conclusions and Recommendations of the Chisinau Conference (ANNEX I).
Meeting of the Heads of the SEECM Supreme Audit Institutions “South East Europe SAIs: Developments and Prospects”, followed by the International Conference “Ways to Improve SAIs Activity within the European Vector Framework: Experience and Practices of the South-East European SAIs”

On 18-20 September 2008, in Chisinau, the Meeting of the Heads of the SEECM Supreme Audit Institutions took place, organized under the auspices of the Moldovan SEECM Chairmanship.

Taking into account the promotion process of the regional cooperation in South East Europe, the aim of the meeting was expressed in launching, consolidating of the information and practices’ exchange among the SEECM Supreme Audit Institutions in financial management/external public audit, which will contribute to the profiling of the SEE as a region based on European common standards and values, in compliance with the main European integration objective, as a basis for the implementation of the reforms and development of the states of the region.

The meeting was attended by the Presidents and representatives of the SAIs from the South East Europe: Albania, Bulgaria, Hellenic Republic, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova, Romania and Turkey, as well as by Special Invitees: President of the EUROSAI, representatives of SIGMA and the Swedish National Office for Audit (ONAS).

Acknowledging the importance and authenticity of the improvement processes of the SAIs activity in the framework of the European vector, as well as recognizing the transformation of SAIs as a significant component for the European perspective of the South East European states, the meeting of the Heads of the SEECM Supreme Audit Institutions culminated with the adoption of the Common Declaration (ANNEX II).

In the same context, on 19th September 2008, the International Conference “Ways to Improve SAIs Activity within the European Vector Framework: Experience and Practices of the South-East European SAIs” took place, that highlighted the necessity for strengthening the efficiency of the external audit in public financial management area, which constitutes both a fundamental component in ensuring high level standards in public financial management field, and a basic premise for a good governance as a generator of benefits for people and economic and social development of both the states and region as a whole.
Furthermore, the Chisinau Conference underlined the importance of the development and enlargement of cooperation on the bilateral, regional and international levels, through a systematic exchange of experience and best practices among the SAIs, INTOSAI, EUROSAI, as well as other relevant structures, strengthening of the cooperation representing a necessity for the audit institutions. Thus, the adjustment of the audit activity of the SAI to the new conditions of governance, appliance of the audit methods and standards, efficient and effective functioning, as well as transparency ensuring in its activities – are qualified as requisites requirements for the pro-active development of the respective domain.
International Conference for the Central and Eastern Europe, Balkans, Caucasus and Baltic States “Science and Education Policies”

On 19 September 2008, in Chisinau, the International Conference for the Central and Eastern Europe, Balkans, Caucasus and Baltic States “Science and Education Policies” took place, which was attended by the Ministers of Education and Science, Presidents of the Academies of Sciences from Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Western Balkans, CIS and Baltic States. Around 74 scientists out of 24 countries of the above mentioned regions and 9 international organizations, as well as 120 participants from the host country, representatives of the Embassies in Chisinau, attended the Conference, amounting to almost 200 participants.

The pro-active participation of the representatives of the academic circles, Ministries of Education and Sciences, International Organizations and Foundations, has contributed to getting closer in setting up a new common approach to the main subject of the Conference, based on the triad: Education – Research – Innovation. Also, the Conference held its work in 2 separate sessions: “Strengthening of the international impact of the research and education national programs”, “Research consolidation in the high level education”. The participants presented reports, actively debated in the framework of the thematic sessions. The Chisinau International Conference culminated with the adoption of the Joint Declaration and the Final Communiqué (ANNEX III and ANNEX IV).
Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova to the South-East European Cooperation Process

Meeting of the Committee of the SEECP Political Directors and the Joint Meeting of the SEECP Political Directors and SEECP Directors responsible for EU Affairs

On 26 September 2008, Chisinau hosted the Meeting of the Committee of the SEECP Political Directors and the Joint Meeting of the SEECP Political Directors and Directors responsible for EU Affairs from the SEECP participating states.

In accordance with the Agenda of the meeting and the realities evolving in South Eastern region, both political SEECP meetings held in Chisinau discussed the aspects related to the current situation in the region, the progress achieved in the regional cooperation process and the interaction and cooperation between the SEECP and the Regional Cooperation Council. Furthermore, the meeting discussed the promotion of the regional approach dedicated to the strengthening of the sectoral cooperation with the EU, European Agenda for South East Europe – common objective, two mechanisms. At the same time, the SEECP Chairmanship of the Republic of Moldova presented the Program and Calendar of events which already took place and which are scheduled to be organized in the framework of the respective mandate. In this context, the participants welcomed and fully supported the dedicated efforts of the SEECP Chairmanship of the Republic of Moldova in the elaboration of the SEECP Chairmanship Programme. Taking into account the subjects of a common interest discussed in the framework of the SEECP Political Directors meeting, the representatives of the SEECP countries highlighted the visible evolutions related to the cooperation process among the South East European states, underlying the necessity to apply the regional ownership and leadership principle, assumed by the SEECP participating states in the process of consolidation of the dialogue and development of the region. In addition, the participants unanimously recognized the imperativity of the regional cooperation as a pre-condition for the European integration processes. Taking into account the launch of the functionality and activity of the RCC Secretariat, the RCC Secretary General presented the results achieved in the transition process.
from the Stability Pact for South East Europe to RCC, political consultations with the South East European state, members of the RCC, establishment and evolution of the dialogue with regional organizations, initiatives and partners, cooperation with the EU, progress in the networking process among the RCC National Coordinators from the South East Europe, RCC Secretariat, European Commission and relevant International Financial Institutions. In the same context, the RCC delegation presented the progress on the coordination and streamlining process of the regional initiatives and structures, highlighting the future activities of the RCC Secretariat, the participating states expressing the support for the implementation process of the RCC Strategic Work Programme 2008-2009, based on the Agenda of the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova. Furthermore, in compliance with close interaction and cooperation between the RCC Secretariat and the supreme political forum SEECP, as well as taking into consideration the necessity for strengthening of the cooperation between these two regional arrangements, the SEECP participating states expressed their view on the major importance of this process in the European dimension, underlying the role of RCC as a key interlocutor of the European Union and other international partners in the SEE region. In the same context, RCC Secretary General stated the need to maintain the continuity and coherence of the SEECP political approach, an essential role in this sense being attributed to the French EU Presidency, as well as to the future Czech and Swedish EU Presidencies. Thus, the representatives of EU French Presidency and the future Czech Presidency expressed the significant importance of the regional cooperation and the support for the joint efforts of the states and relevant structures aimed at accomplishing the preset regional objectives.

Bearing in mind the new realities and processes launched in the South East European region, as well as the existing challenges in this dimension, the meeting highlighted the crucial importance of reviewing and adaptation of the South East European Agenda, as to maintain the sustainable position and visibility on the Agenda of the European Union and NATO.

In this context, the year 2009 will represent a crucially important political momentum for the states of the region as far as the acceleration process of the European integration is concerned. Taking into account the existent differences in the stages of dialogue among the South East European states with a clearly defined European perspective, the Chisinau SEECP political meetings highlighted the necessity for cooperation, support and sustainable assistance of the already EU and NATO members in the cooperation and dialogue process with the non-EU and NATO members, with integration aspirations into the EU and NATO.
Meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs

On 31 October 2008, in Chisinau, the Meeting of the Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs of the SEECP participating states “Protection of human beings against the new technological challenges” took place.

Taking into account the importance of the regional cooperation in Justice and Home Affairs domains, the meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs discussed aspects of major and current interest for the countries of the region in the cooperation process on fighting cyber crime, as well as on illicit juridical and judicial processing of personal data. In the context of the necessity to consolidate and strengthen the dialogue and cooperation of the SEECP participating states aimed at joining the efforts directed to an increased and enhanced collaboration in Justice and Home Affairs field, the SEECP Ministers of Justice signed the Memorandum on legal and judicial guarantees against unlawful processing of personal data (ANNEX V). The respective document relates to the ensuring of respect for personal rights and freedoms, despite the citizenship and residence, to private life, stipulating the access to justice and assessment of the cause in conditions of confidentiality, in case of an illicit operation of automatic processing of data with character. At the same time, the SEECP Ministers of Home Affairs adopted the Common Declaration regarding the strengthening of cooperation in combating cyber crime (ANNEX VI), which consolidates the efforts of the SEECP countries in both preventing and fighting cyber crime, as well as in elaborating of new appropriate methods, techniques and means of combating related crimes in all of their forms.
The XIIth Meeting of the Steering Group of the Regional Anticorruption Initiative (RAI)

On 31 October 2008, in Chisinau, the Meeting of the Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs of the SEECP participating states “Protection of human beings against the new technological challenges” took place.

In compliance with the objectives of the RAI Initiative, whose activity is mainly directed towards ensuring the efficient implementation of the international anticorruption standards, undertaking of the best practices in this domain and strengthening of the dialogue among the authorities responsible for fighting corruption in South Eastern Europe, the meeting of the RAI Steering Group culminated with the elaboration of a Common Regulation on a long run, which presents the most efficient ways of reporting on the corruption related issues and problems, as well as includes a mechanism of spreading and collecting the questionnaires related to the perception of corruption on the high level.
Meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Health

On 7 November 2008, in Chisinau, the Meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Health was held. The high level SEECP event, like all other sector meetings organized under the auspicious of the SEECP Chairmanship of the Republic of Moldova, gathered high level political representatives and experts from the SEECP participating states, as well as representatives of the regional and international organizations and initiatives, with a common interest in strengthening the regional cooperation in health area – cooperation that contributes to the advancement and development of the states of the region in compliance with the EU standards.

In this context and keeping the continuity of the subjects discussed during the WHO Ministerial Conference “Health Systems, Health and Wealth” held in Tallin, in June 2008, the Chisinau Meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Health proposed to highlight the aspects related to the accomplishments and perspectives of strengthening the health systems, by means of reducing the inequalities in health care in South East Europe.

The high level SEECP Health Ministerial meeting provided an excellent platform for performing useful exchange of information regarding the experience of the SEECP participating states, in relation to apply and implement the assumed commitments both in the framework of the Tallin Charter and the WHO Resolution regarding the Management of Health Systems in European Region (EUR/RC58/R4).

The presentations performed in the framework of the Chisinau meeting revealed the fact that the states of the region undertake concrete steps aimed at reducing the inequalities in providing health care, facing common challenges in this regard, a fact that determines the necessity in strengthening regional cooperation and undertaking joint efforts in order to adequately respond to these challenges.

In this context, the SEECP Ministers of Health, in the presence of the representatives of the regional and international organizations and initiatives, adopted the Declaration of the SEECP Ministers of Health “Achievements and challenges of strengthening health system performance through addressing inequalities in health services in South Eastern Europe” (ANNEX VII).

At the same time, in the framework of the Meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Health, the Agreement on cooperation in health domain and medical sciences between the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Moldova and Ministry of Health of Albania was signed.
Informal Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the SEECP

On 30 January 2009, Chisinau hosted the Informal Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the SEECP. The Meeting was attended by high level representatives of the Foreign Ministries from the SEECP participating states, Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council, representatives of the current Czech and incoming Swedish EU Presidencies, as well as officials from the European Commission.

The high level SEECP representatives discussed the current political and economic situation in the South East Europe in view of the European and Euro-Atlantic integration processes, deepening of the global financial crisis and its possible adverse effects, as well as the possibilities for further SEE advancement under these circumstances. Taking into account the recent developments in the South East European region and the subjects for discussion included in the agenda, the delegations unanimously expressed the necessity for joining the efforts in approaching the challenges of the financial and energy crises, as well as for attracting of the European, regional and international financial and political institutions into these processes. Furthermore, the delegations discussed the ways of consolidating and developing the Regional Cooperation Council as an operational arm for the regional cooperation in South Eastern Europe and advancement mechanism of the states of the region in the integration processes into the European Union and alignment to the European standards, values and principles. The SEECP meeting revealed the necessity to intensify the dialogue and cooperation in the South East European region on all of the priority domains of a major interest: economic and social development; energy and infrastructure; justice and home affairs; security cooperation; building human capital. Meantime, the delegations referred to the huge potential of the region, which provides a solid basis for joining efforts of the participating states towards the achievement of the long lasting objectives aimed at ensuring the stability, security, sustainable development and prosperity of countries and their people. Furthermore, the meeting concluded that added urgency, self-responsibility and solidarity among the countries of the South East Europe are the key tools in ensuring continued positive trends in regional cooperation in South East Europe.

Also, in the framework of the SEECP political meeting, the preliminary results of the Moldovan SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office 2008 were presented, marked by the successful accomplishment of a range of political and sector events.
Meeting of the Heads of Consular Services of the SEECP participating states

On 24 April 2009, the first Meeting of the Heads of Consular Services of the SEECP participating states took place in Chişinău, under the auspices of the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova.

The Meeting was attended by the Heads and representatives of Consular Services from the SEECP participating states, as well as by the Director of MARRI Regional Centre and representatives of the RCC Secretariat in Sarajevo and RCC Liaison Office in Brussels. The agenda of the first Meeting of the Heads of Consular Services of the SEECP participating states included two main topics “Discussions on the ways of addressing visa regime issues through bilateral mechanisms” and “Identifying general practical principles for launching a systematic dialogue on the visa issue in the SEECP framework”.

The participants to the Meeting highly appreciated the initiative of the SEECP CiO of the Republic of Moldova to convene such a Meeting and expressed the general opinion that a systematic dialogue on the issue of visa regime among SEECP participating states should be established.

The participants to the Meeting expressed the view that the SEECP framework is the most suitable forum for discussing and approaching possibilities of facilitating the visa regime for experts from the SEECP participating states, and the RCC Secretariat, MARRI Regional Centre and European Commission should be actively involved and participate in this process.

The meeting concluded that the existing visa regime among the countries of the region constitutes a major barrier for participation of the experts of a number of countries in a variety of activities within SEECP and RCC framework. In mean time, considering the fact that a multilateral approach, general for all SEECP countries is currently impossible to be applied, the participants agreed that serious efforts should be undertaken through bilateral mechanisms that would advance the general situation on this domain. In this regard, a number of bilateral meetings among representatives of the SEECP participating states were organized on the margins of the Meeting. The Conclusions of the meeting are attached herewith (ANNEX VIII).
The event was attended by experts and Heads of Competition Authorities of the SEECP participating states, representatives of the European Commission Delegation to the Republic of Moldova, representatives of the Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat (RCC), Competition Centre of the OECD with the headquarters in Budapest, as well as representatives of the World Bank in competition domain.

In accordance with the agenda of the meeting, on 21 May 2009, the event was held on an expert level. Thus, it discussed the aspects related to the “Mechanism and practices of investigation of cartel agreements”. In this context, participants exchanged information, experience and views on the relevant subjects.

In the framework of the second session of the meeting, experts focused on approaching aspects related to the draft document “Mechanism on the information exchange among the SEECP competition authorities” (ANNEX IX), a document elaborated by the National Agency for Competition Protection (NACP) of the Republic of Moldova and further proposed for discussions. Participants presented a range of suggestions and recommendations, dedicated to the improvement and finalization of the respective document.

On 22 May 2009, the high level Meeting of the SEECP Competition Authorities took place. In the framework of the above mentioned event, participants agreed on the further strengthening of the cooperation among the SEECP countries in the competition field. Thus, NACP proposed the launch common evaluation process on the assessment of the competition environment, enhancement of the exchange of experience directed to the improvement of the competition law and investigation of the competition law infringements cases. Furthermore, a relevant document on the “Mechanism on the information exchange among the SEECP competition authorities” was elaborated. Taking into account the finalization of the SEECP Chairmanship mandate of the Republic of Moldova, the incoming SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Turkey was invited to continue the practice of holding high level meetings in the competition field, as well as to contribute to the adoption of the above mentioned document in the framework of the 3rd Meeting of the SEECP Competition Authorities.

Also, the participants highly appreciated the initiative of the Republic of Moldova to establish a systematic cooperation framework among the competition authorities of the SEECP participating states, based on common principles and long-term objectives.
Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova to the South-East European Cooperation Process

“Future through Cooperation”

12th Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP)

In the framework of the Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova to the SEECP, on 5 June 2009, in Chisinau, the 12th Meeting of the SEECP Heads of State and Government took place, preceded on 2-3 June 2009 by the Meeting of the SEECP Political Directors, and on 4 June 2009, by the Meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Annual Meeting of the Regional Cooperation Council.

Taking into account the SEECP role of the main political Forum in South East European region, the objective of the Meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Foreign Affairs was expressed in approaching subjects relevant to the progresses in South East Europe, as well as aspects related to the advancement process of the SEECP participating states towards the European and Euro-Atlantic integration. Furthermore, the meeting discussed on the ways of strengthening the SEECP role as the “united voice” of the South East Europe region and the enhancement of cooperation between the SEECP and Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).

The Meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Foreign Affairs approved a series of documents related to the regional cooperation process in South East Europe:

- Annual Report of the RCC Secretary General on the regional cooperation in South East Europe;
- RCC Strategic Work Programme 2009-2010.

In the same context, the Meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Foreign Affairs approved the political documents of the Chisinau SEECP Summit:

- Chisinau Political Declaration;
- Chisinau Joint Statement.

The 12th Meeting of the SEECP Heads of State and Government held for the first time in the Republic of Moldova, marked the finalization of the mandate of the Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova to the SEECP 2008-2009.

In the framework of the SEECP high level political meeting, high level officials of the SEECP participating states discussed outlined the progress achieved in the South East European region, as well as discussed the developments of the SEECP countries in the alignment process to the European standards, principles and values towards the European integration, the European perspective of the states of the region being the driving force for the realization of the democratic internal reforms. Also, the Meeting of the SEECP Heads of State and Government underlined the productive results in the South East European regional cooperation process, highlighting the qualitatively advance level of dialogue...
and cooperation between the SEECP and Regional Cooperation Council.

Furthermore, the need for using the high economic potential of the South East European region, which represents an important basis for the sustainable development and prosperity of the whole region, was underlined. Taking into account the necessity to ensure the development of the regional cooperation and strengthening of the created regional instruments, the high level political meeting underlined the major significance for the continuous support of the European Union and International Financial Institutions both politically and financially, expressed in supporting the regional projects in the priority domains of cooperation, which contribute to the sustainable development of the region and rapprochement of the South East European countries to the EU. Moreover, 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. The 12th SEECP Summit culminated with the endorsement of a range of documents of a significant importance for the strengthening and development of the regional cooperation process in South East Europe:

1. Chisinau Political Declaration (ANNEX X);
2. Chisinau Joint Statement (ANNEX XI);
3. Annual Report of the RCC Secretary General on the regional cooperation in South East Europe (ANNEX XII);
4. RCC Strategic Work Programme 2009-2010 (ANNEX XIII);

By adopting the Chisinau SEECP Summit, the SEECP participating states reaffirmed their commitment for the need to undertake joint and dedicated efforts for the contribution to the sustainable development of the South East Europe and prosperity of the people of the region.
CONCLUSIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

On 17 June 2008, in Chişinău, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova organized the International Conference “Regional Cooperation – Opportunities, Challenges and Synergy”, held under the regional Chairmanships the Republic of Moldova exercises during 2008-2009.

The conference was attended by the Secretaries General of the Central European Initiative, Regional Cooperation Council, GUAM, Deputy Secretary General of BSEC, representatives of the European Commission, Council of Europe, OSCE, World Bank, UNDP, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, IOM, Danube Cooperation Process, as well as of the present and future EU Presidencies, MARRI and GUAM Presidencies and other regional initiatives.

The Conference was chaired by Mr. Andrei STRATAN, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova and Mr. Valeriu OSTALEP, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration. The list of participants is attached herewith.

The Conference aimed to discuss two main issues: Political approach in regional cooperation and Sectoral approach in regional cooperation.

The Conference was held in an open and constructive atmosphere of discussions, during which several important ideas, views and conclusions on regional cooperation were launched.

Regional cooperation, as an effective mechanism and framework for the enhancement of political dialogue among the participating countries, regional arrangements and international community, represents a prerequisite for ensuring a continuous development of the parties involved. In this context, the conference highlighted the tremendous importance regional cooperation implies.
During the recent period, the regional cooperation process has gained new motivation, changing its profile. Nowadays, the countries of the South East European region undertake and apply the regional ownership and leadership principle, proving thus its maturity and dedicated political will. Large institutionalization processes of the regional initiatives streamlining are emerging in this region. Some of the regional arrangements are expanding their activities, being project oriented and dedicated to contribute to the development of the cooperation in a result-oriented manner, by consolidating all of the necessary efforts and resources and enhancing collaboration outside their cooperation framework.

In this context, the awareness of an “open regionalization” concept, whereby the countries working together in their own environment are opened to cooperation and enhanced dialogue with other regions, needs to be given the required incentive and platform for further development.

Furthermore, high representatives of the regional arrangements, initiatives and processes underlined the necessity of the involvement of the international community and European Commission in contributing to the development of a new constructive policy in the regions, striving for preserving the interest of international financial institutions in supporting and further contributing to the regional cooperation as a sine qua non process.

There is a need for keeping all of the stakeholders in cooperation, and both unavoidable and necessary partners engaged. Meantime, was specified that there is a need for joint and concrete actions for getting the Governments on board, which certainly requires political will and political driving force from the countries.

As a driving force for the development of the countries involved into regional cooperation process, European integration and alignment to the European standards, values and principles remains the main common objective of the states, contributing to the implementation of the necessary domestic reforms in all areas of activity, based on rule of law and democratic principles. Although different and diverse, the countries cooperating within the regional arrangements framework need to learn to live with the existing differences, keeping the European integration as the main driving force for their re-profiling.

The regional cooperation as an efficient instrument for the advancement towards EU integration can not be perceived as separated from the European aspirations and perspectives of the countries which share common values. All participants agreed on and highlighted the necessity to keep the regional cooperation on the EU Agenda, the present and future EU Presidencies having a special role in this sense.

The strengthening of the dialogue among the countries participating to regional arrangements, initiatives and processes requires cooperation and coordination. Thus, a better coordination of the goals and activities of the regional arrangements and processes, imply setting up an efficient mechanism of cooperation, sectoral dialogue platforms. All of this is needed for implementing concrete projects and programs in a wide range of priority domains of activity, intended to the benefit of countries involved into the regional cooperation process.
Taking into account the common priorities and interconnected sectoral domains of activity, regional organizations and arrangements should direct their efforts towards achievement of the coordination goal through concrete projects and results, avoiding overlapping and concentrating on promoting a common goal to be reached by dedicated joint concrete actions. In this context, synergy represents the key concept and principle the regional cooperation partners need to apply on both political and sectoral levels. Furthermore, a better coordination of activities of the regional structures can be achieved by establishing a viable network, meant to facilitate the exchange of information, to encourage exchange of best practices and lessons learnt, to adjust and streamline their activities related to concrete projects and programs in different areas of cooperation and activities. Thus, there is a need to continue with the sectoral coordination meetings, which provide a practical platform for discussions and assessment of the opportunities, advantages and shortcomings of the processes, projects and programs launched in all areas of common interest and shared responsibility.

The conference offered an additional opportunity to review the work and activity of different regional processes, initiatives and organizations in the priority domains, such as: economic and social development, energy, infrastructure and multimodal transport, justice and home affairs, security, migration, tourism, human capital, providing a platform for identifying synergies among them.

Following the discussions held during the Chişinău Conference, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration has identified several important recommendations:

1. **Regional cooperation is very much needed and represents an efficient instrument and mechanism for the advancement towards EU integration**
   - there is a need to maintain the assumed commitments and political will of the stakeholders involved into the regional cooperation process;
   - dedicated concrete actions are needed for getting Governments involved, which require political driving force from the countries;
   - regional cooperation can not be perceived as separated from the European aspirations of the countries involved, sharing common values;
   - EU Agenda needs to keep the regional cooperation among the states and viable regional organizations, arrangements and initiatives;
   - present and future EU Presidencies are playing an essential role in this context

2. **The enhanced dialogue among the participating regional and international parties requires cooperation and coordination**
   - priorities of the regional organizations, arrangements and initiatives are at most, the same;
   - the objective of coordination is expressed in concrete actions and results;
   - keeping the coordinating meetings viable and launching the platform for sectoral coordination meetings in the priority domains of activity;
countries participating into the regional cooperation process need to undertake joint efforts intended to the coordination of activities within the framework of regional organizations, arrangements and initiatives;

“open regionalization” is required for getting closer different regions, in their common European objectives and aspirations

3. Common priorities of the regional cooperation process and interconnected sectoral domains of activity should be directed towards elaboration and implementation of concrete projects and programs

- in order to avoid overlapping, a networking is needed, established on the level of experts of the participating states, representatives of the regional structures and European and international community;

- in this context, synergy is the key-word;

- the exchange of information, best practices, launched projects intended to a better coordination of activities is essential;

- there is a necessity to increase public awareness on the opportunities, challenges and results provided by the regional cooperation process in the framework of regional institutions
“Future through Cooperation”

South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP)
Meeting of Heads of the Supreme Audit Institutions (SAI)
Chişinău, 19 September 2008

JOINT DECLARATION
of the Meeting of SEECP Heads of the Supreme Audit Institutions
“South East Europe SAIs: Developments and Prospects”

We, the Heads of delegations participant to the Meeting of SEECP Heads of the Supreme Audit Institutions: Mr. Robert Çeku, Mr. Valeriy Dimitrov, Mr. Konstantinos Kostopoulos, Mrs. Ală Popescu, Mr. Miroslav Ivanšević, Mr. Dan Drosu Şaguna, and Mr. Mehmet Damar,

In the presence of special invitees of the Moldovan SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office: Mr. Jacek Jezierski, President of EUROSAI; Mr. Cesare de Montis, European Commission Delegation to Moldova; Mr. Joop Vrolijk, SIGMA Representative; Mr. Gert Jönsson, Deputy Auditor General of the Swedish National Audit Office,

On the occasion of the meeting in Chişinău, 19 September 2008, at the invitation of the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office,

CONVINCED that regional cooperation is a key to development and stability in South East Europe and a process complementary to advancing towards European Union integration;

CONSIDERING that intense cooperation relations contribute to closeness and promotion of common policies of the states involved as well as to advancement and dynamic development of the SEECP, thus ensuring the fulfillment of the widely recognized objectives and goals;

EXPRESSING their conviction that European integration is a secure way to achieve stability and sustainable political, social, and economic development of the countries in the region, being also a strong incentive for closer cooperation of the countries involved;
APPRECIATING the efforts so far of the states in the region to continue the process of internal reforms designed to adjust to the European standards in this area, democratic principles and good governance practice;

WISHING TO contribute to the development and improvement of public financial management in order to ensure that government objectives of the states in the region are fulfilled in a transparent, efficient and effective way;

ADOPTED today this Joint Declaration:

The Supreme Audit Institutions of the participating countries:

- acknowledge the importance and relevancy of the processes aimed at improving SAIs activity in the context of European integration, appreciating the transformation of the participating SAIs as a remarkable element for the European perspective of the South East Europe countries;
- the implementation of institutional reforms in public external audit and financial control represents a prerequisite for the EU accession;
- choose to get in line with the best public external audit practice and international standards by adjusting their legal frameworks and process of reforming public external audit work;
- SAIs of states participating in the SEECP, which have already become EU Members will play a supporting role in the fulfillment of the commitments related to the implementation of the INTOSAI Standards of Audit, European Guidelines, and other international papers in the field of public external audit;
- encourage cooperation with other highly developed and internationally recognized SAIs from the EU, seeking a shift to a modern audit approach in accordance with the best EU practice, by preserving the context specific for our countries, and which does not deviate from the general principles of the European approaches regarding Public Financial Management and Control.
DECLARATION

1. For the regions, the Conference recommends that mechanisms should exist at national level for regular exchange of information and experience between decisionmakers and the scientific community. These mechanisms should assist the decision-makers in formulating science and education policies, and thus contribute to the creation of knowledge-based society.

The Conference recommends that the National Academies of Sciences to take lead in this process at national level. The Academies must ensure that the entire scientific community is included in this process.

2. The Conference invites UNESCO to convene a follow-up meeting within two years to assess the progress of these recommendations’ implementation.

3. The Conference urges major fund-providers (European Commission, National Governments, donors, international foundations, etc.) to allocate dedicated funds to support the implementation of the above recommendations, both at national level and supra-regionally.
Science & Education Policies
International Conference for the Central and Eastern Europe, Balkans, Caucasus and Baltic States

September 18-21, 2008, Chișinău, Republic of Moldova

FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ

As a follow-up to the International Conference of the Academies of Eastern and South Eastern Europe on “Global Science and National Policies: the Role of Academies”, organized by the UNESCO Office in Venice (BRESCE), the UNESCO Office in Moscow and the International Council for Science (ICSU) hosted by the Academy of Sciences of Moldova in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, 4-5 May 2007, the International Conference for the Central and Eastern Europe, Balkans, Caucasus and Baltic States on “Science and Education Policies” was held in Chișinău, from 18 to 21 September 2008. The Conference was organized by joint efforts of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova and the Ministry of Education and Youth of the Republic of Moldova, with the support of the UNESCO Office in Moscow, Central European Initiative, the U.S. Civilian Research and Development Foundation (CRDF), Office of Naval Research Global (ONRG) and Moldovan Research and Development Association (MRDA), among others.

This event, officially included in the Calendar of Events of the Moldovan Presidency to the South East European Co-operation Process (SEECP), brought together key leaders and policy makers at the highest levels in science and education: Presidents of the Academies of Sciences and Ministers of Science and Education, participating or represented, as well as representatives of international organizations from the above-mentioned regions, including representatives of the European Commission and experts from the United States.

The programme of the Conference addressed several challenges affecting science and higher education policies today, mainly: strengthening international impact of national research and education programs; strengthening research in higher education; developing a knowledge-based economy; stemming and reversing brain drain.

Following the presentations and discussions held during the sessions addressing the above themes, the participants agreed that:

1. An increased attention to the synergy between research and higher education in developing national science and education policies plays an essential role in the building of a sustainable knowledge-based economy;
2. Excellence in knowledge management can be acquired only by strengthening the international impact of national research and education programs, by fostering international cooperation at bilateral and multilateral levels;
3. The topics of interest and the problems faced are similar across the regions targeted by the Conference, and that great benefit could be obtained from exchanges of best practices, benchmarking activities, joint actions and programmes for regional cooperation, horizontal support activities with considerable regional relevance and other actions which require cooperative efforts;

4. A stronger link between the education field and that of research-development-innovation will result in a qualitative improvement of the process of education, increasing the access of students and academic staff to the state-of-the-art scientific investigations and creating opportunities of operative orientation of the education towards the tendencies of development of science at an international level;

5. A robust and healthy science community, capable of solving problems of global importance, can be acquired only in the case when research and education work hand in hand;

6. Informal science education is as important as the formal one, which would enable the society to make proper use of the scientific knowledge as well as to face threats associated to it, especially in nuclear physics, biotechnology, nanotechnology, thus to preserve not only the environment but also many human lives;

7. Interdisciplinary education and, consequently, research can’t be avoided in the generation of new knowledge today, therefore fostering interdisciplinary communication and building bridges across sectors and disciplines is imperative;

8. The connection between the higher education and science is primarily established by the legal framework. The research activities within the faculties should be supported, strengthened and enhanced;

9. The young generation of scientists plays a crucial role in fostering the knowledge society and therefore their implication in the processes of decision and policy-making is of great significance;

10. A special focus in developing science and education policies needs to be placed on high skilled mobility issues, encouraging on the one hand international mobility of talents and on the other mitigating the negative effects of “brain drain”;

11. Participants attested positive changes in the national education systems, after the adoption of the Bologna Process principles (Republic of Moldova case).

The participants acknowledged that a specific comprehensive programme of actions related to science and education management is necessary both at national and regional levels. In conclusion, the participants asked UNESCO, the European Commission and other international organizations, as well as national authorities, to consider the following recommendations in developing science and education policies:

1. Open up national programmes and institutions to participants from other countries, thereby encouraging own researchers to compete and collaborate with the best talents;

2. Create and support specific incentives in national research funding schemes for engaging researchers in cross-border research cooperation;

3. Reinforce research cooperation agreements with third countries and international organisations to exchange best practices, identify common priorities and potential benefits, and jointly define and implement research and education programmes;
4. All stakeholders involved, especially national governments, should give a high priority to human capital improvement by means of education, and assurance that knowledge is engaged in all fields of national economy and that easier access to scientific information is provided;

5. Promote the development of centers of excellence for scientific research and education and frame the conditions for innovation and high tech entrepreneurship, therefore making the country attractive to highly skilled workers, both within the country and from outside;

6. Contribute to regional, supra-national centers and networks to increase priority setting;

7. Collaborate to ensure that the economic and intellectual benefits arising from the growing international mobility of researchers and students are enjoyed by all who have contributed to its realization, make existing rules and procedures for international cooperation of scientists more simple;

8. Support the creation and maintenance of intellectual/scientific diaspora networks and cooperative projects between expatriates and their home country, expand virtual and distant learning opportunities and promote real and virtual return of talent programmes;

9. All stakeholders, especially national governments, should play specific attention in policy making to programmes and measures to stimulate young people to enter the field of research and education;

10. Undertake measures of substantive inclusion of the business sector in financing of the research by using the scientific knowledge and results in their own spheres and of course, raising the state participation in the funding process of research and development in higher education;

11. Formulate conditions and mechanisms to encourage innovative entrepreneurship initiatives, initiate measures (establishing a framework agreement) for commercialization and transfer of intellectual property rights, as well as strengthen regional know-how exchange and joint trainings on developing transfer of technology skills;

12. Support awareness raising and encourage the building of bridges between knowledge and its perception by the general public, as well by the national decision-makers;

13. Acknowledge the role of national academies, along with research councils and foundations, in science policy and in contributing to the creation of the knowledge-based society;

14. Convene joint meetings of decision-makers with science and education representatives on a regular basis and enhance communication in the intervening period, both at national and regional levels.

This document constitutes a contribution of the Central and Eastern European countries, Balkans, Caucasus and Baltic States to the World Conference on Higher Education (Paris, July 2009) and World Science Forum (Budapest, November 2009).
ANNEX V

“Future through Cooperation”

MEMORANDUM
on legal and judicial guarantees
against unlawful processing of personal data

The member states of the South-East European Cooperation Process, signatory hereto.

CONSIDERING the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 4 November 1950, Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data of 28 January 1981, the Additional Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data regarding supervisory authorities and cross-border data flows of 8 November 2001;

APPEALING to member states to take all the necessary steps to ratify the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data as well as the Additional Protocol to the Convention;

TAKING into account the definitions of the terms of reference established in the instruments mentioned above;

STRESSING the necessity to extend the safeguards for everyone’s rights and fundamental freedoms, and in particular the right to the respect for privacy, taking into account the increasing flow across borders of personal data undergoing automatic processing;

REAFFIRMING at the same time their commitment to freedom of information regardless of frontiers;

RECOGNIZING that it is necessary to reconcile the fundamental values of the respect for privacy and the free flow of information between individuals;

EMPHASIZING the priority of settling and guaranteeing effective legal remedies to individuals, who are victims of an unlawful processing of personal data;

Have agreed as follows:

Article 1

The State Parties will focus all their efforts on strengthening the regional cooperation for the promotion of lawful practices in the fields of automatic processing of personal data.

Each Party shall take the necessary measures in its domestic law to give effect to the basic principles for data protection carried out both in the public and private sectors set out in international and national legal framework.
Article 2
The Parties to this Memorandum will secure under their jurisdiction for every individual, whatever his nationality or residence, respect for his fundamental rights and freedoms, and in particular his right to private life, with regard to the automated processing of personal data relating to him.

To secure the right to private life, the Parties will supervise the respect for the principle of fairness and proportionality necessary for the ensuring access to information of general interest and the free flow of information between individuals.

Article 3
The Parties will unconditionally ensure the right of being informed of the processing operation and of requiring the rectification of his personal data to the person whose data are being processed.

Any restriction with regard to the exertion of these rights must be laid down in the domestic law, must pursue legitimate purposes and must not be abusive.

Article 4
The Parties will not allow the processing of personal data in a way incompatible with the legitimate purposes except for the situation when this operation is expressly permitted by the legal provisions which are necessary in a democratic society.

Article 5
The competent authorities of the State Parties will take technical and organizational measures necessary for the protection of the personal data from their illegal processing; will secure the data subject the access to personal data tiles which are processed automatically and to object to the processing of personal data relating to him when that data is used unlawfully.

Article 6
The Parties will secure the establishment and the efficient functioning of an independent supervising authority, which shall monitor the national protection system, and shall be vested with investigation and intervention powers in the process of unlawfully processing of personal data.

Article 7
The Parties will ensure any individual who pretends to be a victim of an unlawful operation with regard to the automatic processing of personal data, the access to justice and the examination of the case in a confidential way.

Article 8
The State Parties undertake to establish appropriate civil, penal and administrative remedies as well as sanctions for violations of the international and domestic laws giving effect to the basic principles for data protection.
ANNEX VI

"Future through Cooperation”

COMMON DECLARATION

OF SEECP’S MINISTERS OF HOME AFFAIRS

Regarding the strengthening of cooperation in combating cybercrime

We, the Ministers of Home Affairs of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) Participating States met in Chisinau on October 31, 2008, to address ways of strengthening of cooperation.

AWARE of the danger of spreading the cyber criminality, as well as the cross-border aspect of this negative phenomenon;

EVALUATING the damages and consequences made to banking systems and also to the entire economic security of the regional states;

ASCERTAINING the lack of a clear mechanism and a regional cooperation network in crimes committed by means of electronic devices;

AWARE that an efficient fight against cybercrime needs a developed, speedy and functional international cooperation in criminal matters;

WILLING to intensify the existing potential and resources of regional cooperation among the cybercrime competent national law enforcement authorities involved in combating cybercrime;

DETERMINED by the aspirations of our states towards consolidation of our legal framework by adjusting it to Acquis Communautaire aiming to strengthen capacities of local independent and accountable judiciary and law enforcement structures, which in emphasized as a core need on our way to European integration;

EMPHASISING the need of the cooperation in combating the cross-border crime;

BUILDING upon the constructive experience of earlier Joint Meetings of Ministers of Interior and Justice, held under previous SEECP Chairmanships;

INVITING the SEECP participating states to actively participate to the regional events organized in the area of combating the cybercrime;

Have agreed as follows:
1. To undertake adequate measures for the development and implementation of international and regional legal framework.

2. To assure that the establishment, implementation and application of the powers and procedures provided by the Convention on Cybercrime are subject to conditions and safeguards provided by our domestic law, which shall provide for the adequate protection of human rights and liberties, including rights arising pursuant to obligations we have undertaken under the 1950 Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the 1966 United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other applicable international human rights instruments, and which shall incorporate the principle of proportionality.

3. To penalize the entire spectrum of illegal acts committed by using information technology.

4. To establish appropriate methods, techniques and ways of fighting the cybercrime.

5. To assure a high level training at national level of members of law enforcement authorities involved in the process of fighting the cybercrime, including by exchanging advanced experiences and best practices on regional level.

6. To develop national and regional strategies aimed to strengthen the existing mechanisms fighting cybercrime, welcoming the role of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), in light of its newly-launched mandate and its overall efforts for future enhanced regional ownership in the JHA segment of cooperation in South East Europe.

7. To increase the use of Europol, Interpol, SECI Regional Centre as well as other relevant regional initiatives in operational information exchange regarding indicatively the usage of Internet network for propaganda of racial and religious discrimination, extremist ideology, spreading of pornographic materials of minors, recruitment of human trafficking victims, commitment of offences by using false banking cards, electronic payments frauds, also copyrighting, computer-related frauds and cyber terrorism and other serious forms of organized criminality.

8. To further support the efforts made in order to finalise as soon as possible the new legal base for the functioning of the South Eastern European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC).

9. To exchange information regarding the new fraudulent information schemes and also regarding new combating methods of this phenomenon.

10. To create favourable conditions for the improvement of regional cooperation’s legal basis, including the conclusion of intergovernmental agreements regarding the cooperation in the area of combating the cybercrime and police cooperation.

11. To provide mutual assistance in the real-time collection of traffic data associated with specified communications in Party’s territory transmitted by means of a computer system.

12. To establish an effective mechanism to foster cooperation in efforts to combat cybercrime.

Chisinau, 31 October 2008
ANNEX VII

“Future through Cooperation”

“Achievements and challenges of strengthening health system performance through addressing inequalities in health services in South Eastern Europe”

Chişinău, 7 November 2008

DECLARATION of the SEECP Ministers of Health

We, Ministers of Health of the Participating States of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP): Dr. Bujar OSMANI, Dr. Larisa CATRINICI and Prof. Tomica MILOSAVLJ EVIC,

Deputy Minister Dr. Zamira SINOIMERI, Deputy Minister Ms. Gorica SAVOVIC, State Secretary Mr. Ervin Zoltan SZEKELY, Deputy Undersecretary Prof. Dr. Sabahattin AYDIN, Ambassador H.E. Charalambos DIMITRIOU, Director Dr. Svetlana SPASSOVA, National Health Coordinator Dr. Vlasta HRABA K ZERJAVIC,

GATHERED in Chişinău on 7 November 2008, at the SEECP Health Ministerial Meeting “Achievements and challenges of strengthening health system performance through addressing inequalities in health services in South Eastern Europe”, under the auspices of the Moldovan SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office;

IN THE PRESENCE of the representatives of the International and Regional Organizations and Initiatives;

CONVINCED of the necessity to strengthen the regional cooperation in the field of health, as an essential factor of socio-economic development in the South Eastern Europe;

AWARE that SEECP Participating States are facing common risks and challenges in the field of health, which require a close cooperation and adequate response to those challenges;

REAFFIRMING the importance of the SEE Health Network institutionalization and of the future cooperation within this regional initiative under the Regional Cooperation Council;
REAFFIRMING the commitment of common actions to reach the goals and principles of the Tallinn Charter: “Health Systems, Health and Wealth”, adopted at the WHO Regional Office for Europe Ministerial Conference (Tallinn, 25-27 June 2008) and of the Resolution EUR/RC58/R4 on the Management of Health Systems in the WHO European region, adopted at the 58th session of the Regional Committee for Europe (Tbilisi, 15-18 September 2008);

RECOGNIZING the importance of equity, solidarity and universal access to health services – as the main values and principles of a Health System that addresses population needs;

WELCOMING the achieved results in undertaking the social oriented health reforms in the SEECP countries;

BEING firmly convinced of the crucial role of the policies oriented to addressing inequalities in the Health Systems in these reforms;

UNDERTAKE TO:

• SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE the efficient use of inequality-addressing tools in the health systems of the SEECP Participating States, joining common efforts for cooperation and exchange of experiences in the field.

• COOPERATE with international organizations, as well as with donor countries to minimize the potential socio-economic risks and collateral effects in implementing health systems’ reforms in South Eastern Europe.

• EXCHANGE information and experiences as to optimize the infrastructure of the health systems, assuring the increase of cost-efficiency and reduction of inequalities in health service delivery.

• MAKE WIDER USE of international experiences in achieving the main objectives of the Health Systems: improving population health, financial risks protection and responsiveness of the system towards the population needs and expectations.

• MAKE USE of efficient multilateral cooperation opportunities at political, economical and technical levels, including implementation of joint projects aiming at strengthening Health Systems performance.

• CONTRIBUTE to the strengthening of the dialogue and cooperation in the field of Health Systems and Public Health, calling for the future SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office to organize the SEECP Health Ministerial Meeting, ensuring the continuity of the cooperation process.

The participants to the Meeting express their gratitude to Moldovan authorities for the hospitality and excellent organization of the SEECP Health Ministerial Meeting.

Adopted on 7 November 2008, in Chisinau
On 24 April 2009, the first Meeting of the Heads of Consular Services of the SEECP participating states took place in Chişinău, under the auspices of the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova.

The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Constantin BURGHIU, Head of Consular Affairs Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova. The list of participants is attached herewith. The Meeting was attended by the Heads and representatives of Consular Services from the SEECP participating states, as well as by the Director of MARRI Regional Centre and representatives of the RCC Secretariat in Sarajevo and RCC Liaison Office in Brussels.

The agenda of the first Meeting of the Heads of Consular Services of the SEECP participating states included two main topics “Discussions on the ways of addressing visa regime issues through bilateral mechanisms” and “Identifying general practical principles for launching a systematic dialogue on the visa issue in the SEECP framework”.

The participants to the Meeting highly appreciated the initiative of the SEECP CiO of the Republic of Moldova to convene such a Meeting and expressed the general opinion that a systematic dialog on the issue of visa regime among SEECP participating states should be established.

The participants to the Meeting expressed the view that the SEECP framework is the most suitable forum for discussing and approaching possibilities of facilitating the visa regime for experts from the SEECP participating states, and the RCC Secretariat, MARRI Regional Centre and European Commission should be actively involved and participate in this process.

The participants to the meeting agreed that the existing visa regime among the countries of the region constitutes major barriers for participation of experts of a number of countries in a variety of activities within SEECP and RCC framework. In the mean time, considering the fact that a multilateral approach, general for all SEECP countries is currently impossible to be applied, the participants agreed that serious efforts should be
undertaken under the regional umbrella of SEECP and RCC through bilateral mechanisms that would advance the general situation in this domain. In this regard, a number of bilateral meetings among representatives of the SEECP participating states were organized within the Meeting.

As a result of the discussions and bilateral meetings, the representatives from the SEECP participating states highlighted the existing problems and barriers encountered in the participation process of experts from the SEECP region:

1. Lack of diplomatic missions and consular offices in all of the SEECP countries;
2. Differences of approaches on the visa issues related to the SEECP counties;
3. Complex visa procedures for holders of regular passports;
4. Long processing time of visa applications;
5. Impossibility to apply for a visa by mail without the presence of the expert-applicant;
6. No special procedures for the experts, who are representing official institutions;
7. Visa regime – as a complex, sensitive and difficult issue to be approached.

Although different in their policies of visa regimes, as well as perspectives and status towards the EU integration, the representatives of the SEECP participating states agreed on the need to apply a proactive approach and undertake concrete actions vis-à-vis the visa regime facilitation for experts from the SEECP area.

Additionally, the participants to the Meeting have acknowledged the different progress obtained by the SEECP participating states in the Visa Liberalization dialogue with the European Union. In this view, the participants have agreed to initiate common projects of exchange of good practices and experiences in the field of Visa Liberalization with EU.

Taking into account the significance of the visa regime facilitation issue in the SEECP framework, as well as the discussions held during the meeting, the following conclusions were reached:

1. The participants acknowledged the major importance of the visa regime facilitation related issues and agreed upon identifying commonly suitable mechanisms in this respect;
2. The participants stressed out the need of participation in future meetings of all SEECP participating states, as well as the representatives of the RCC Secretariat, MARRI Regional Centre and European Commission;
3. The Chisinau meeting represented the starting meeting of the SEECP Network of the Heads of Consular Services of the SEECP participating states that the SEECP CiO and RCC Secretariat have to maintain active;
4. Taking into account the common objective of EU integration, as well as the strengthening of cooperation in South East European region, the participants expressed the will to make an assessment of the current difficulties encountered in visa obtaining process for experts from SEECP countries;
5. The representatives of a number of SEECP participating states presented concrete proposals for further facilitation of visa procedures for the experts from SEECP countries;

6. Taking into account the existing legal frameworks in the SEECP countries, a number of participants expressed the readiness of using Verbal Notes in order to facilitate the visa procedures, as well as the issuing of the visas at the airport based on special notifications;

7. The participants agreed on evaluating and further discussing the possibility of granting visas for experts from the SEECP countries participating into SEECP and RCC activities for a longer period than it is currently stipulated for normal visa granted to private purposes;

8. The participants discussed the possibility of drafting separate articles in the national visa regime documents, defying the category of experts;

9. The participants agreed that bilateral consultations on visa related issues in the SEECP framework should be kept in the future, enabling thus the respective countries to further strengthen the dialogue and cooperation in the above mentioned domain;

10. The participants agreed to exchange good practices and experience in the process of Visa Liberalization with the EU;

11. The SEECP CiO of the Republic of Moldova invited the incoming Turkish SEECP CiO to hold the next Meeting of the SEECP Heads of Consular Services as soon as possible and to keep the visa regime facilitation issues on the CiO Agenda. The participants decided that the topic for the next meeting will be related to the consular aspects of the SEECP countries and the European Union.
The mechanism of the exchange of information among SEECP Competition Authorities

We, the Heads of the Competition Authorities of the Participating States of the South-East European Cooperation Process (hereinafter referred to as “the Parties”), met in Chisinau on 22 May 2009 at the invitation of the Republic of Moldova as Chairman-in-Office of the SEECP. As a follow-up of the cooperation established in 2008, we agreed on the following principles and mechanism for the exchange of information among competition authorities of the SEECP:

1. In the course of consideration of actions affecting competition, each Party shall have the right to send a request for information concerning competition law and policy to the other Parties;
2. The requesting Party shall state the purpose of its request and/or the basic circumstances of the case;
3. The requested information shall be provided not later than three months after receipt of the request;
4. Information received as a result of application of this document shall not be disclosed unless the Parties agree otherwise;
5. The Parties may refuse to provide the information within the framework of the Agreement on the grounds of their state’s interests concerning the safeguarding of commercial and other secrets according to national law, or on the grounds of confidentiality of the requested information;
6. The transfer of information shall be made in English language by mail/e-mail through designated general contact points or on the occasion of Parties’ representative meetings;
7. This document shall not infringe or otherwise affect the rights and obligations of the Parties related to other international agreements which they are signatories to;
8. The Parties commit themselves to intensify and deepen the cooperation in the field of competition.
We, the Heads of State and Government of the South East European Cooperation Process Participating States, Presidents: Mr. Georgi Pârvanov, Mr. Vladimir Voronin, Mr. Boris Tadić, Prime Minister Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Deputy Prime Ministers: Ms. Jadranka Kosor, Mr. Vujica Lazović, Minister Mr. Antonio Milososki, Deputy Ministers: Mrs. Ana Trišić Babić, Mr. Yannis Valinakis, State Secretary Mr. Bogdan Aurescu, Secretary General Mr. Ferit Hoxha have met in Chisinau on 5 June 2009 at the 12th Meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the SEECP.

In the presence of the Special Invitees of the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova: Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS Mr. Leonidas Chrysanthopoulos, Secretary General of the Central European Initiative Mr. Pietro Ercole Ago, Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council Mr. Hido Biščević, as well as the representatives of the Czech Presidency to the EU, incoming Swedish Presidency to the EU, European Commission, Council of Europe, OSCE, SECI, UN and UNECE.

In the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration Mr. Andrei Stratan, Ministers: Mr. Gordan Jandroković, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Mr. Egemen Bağış, Deputy Ministers: Mr. Lyubomir Kyuchukov, Mr. Valeriu Ostalep, Mr. Milorad Šćepanović.

At this Summit we convened and confirmed the following:

1. We recognized regional cooperation and good neighborly relations in South East Europe, based on the principles of the SEECP Charter, the UN Charter, Helsinki Final Act, OSCE and Council of Europe relevant documents, as prerequisites for advancement of the countries on the way towards European and Euro-Atlantic integration, and for consolidation and ensuring stability and security in the region;

2. We reconfirmed our firm conviction that European and Euro-Atlantic perspective of South East Europe remains the main driving force for advancement of the internal reforms and transformation processes and the most important impetus on the way to achieving long-lasting political, social and economic stability in the region;

3. We share the view that the European Union should remain focused on SEE and strengthen the European perspective of SEE countries which are committed to adopt and implement the EU standards, principles and values, and to fulfill the EU requirements and criteria in accordance with the policies applicable to each of them;
4. We underlined the leading role of the SEECP as the main political forum for regional cooperation among the countries in SEE. We reiterated the common will to further develop the SEECP as the “genuine voice” and the key actor in the region;

**Development of a Stable and Prosperous South East Europe**

5. In the period since the Pomorie Summit on May 21, 2008, important progress has been achieved within the SEECP area in moving closer to the EU and Euro-Atlantic institutions, in further consolidating stability in the region, in strengthening political cooperation and dialogue and in achieving economic prosperity and social development to the benefit of the peoples of the SEECP countries and the region as a whole;

6. We share a common vision for the future of our region, with open and tolerant societies based on the rule of law, functioning democratic institutions, respect for universal human rights and unequivocal adherence to the values of democracy. In that sense, we are pleased to note that most of the SEECP Participating States are members of the Group of Friends of the UN Alliance of Civilizations Initiative;

7. We strongly condemned terrorism and all forms of violence and extremism, whatever their motives. We also reaffirmed the need to vigorously combat all forms of organized crime and corruption thus contributing to security of our countries and the region as a whole;

8. We underlined the importance of continuous enhancement of bilateral relations among our countries in the spirit of good neighborly relations;

9. We expressed the awareness of the global financial and economic crisis and concern of its possible adverse effects to South East Europe. We agreed that there is an increased need for governments of SEE to join efforts, with the essential role of the EU, in addressing any challenges posed, attaching an additional need for regional solidarity and cooperation;

10. We praised the overall work and results achieved by the Regional Cooperation Council and its Secretariat in Sarajevo in advancing regional cooperation within its priority areas during the first year of operation;

11. We recognized the possibilities of enhancing cooperation and developing of concrete large-scale regional development projects as a stimulus to South East Europe to counter the impact of the current crisis, in areas such as - transport and energy, inland waterways, civil aviation cooperation, reconstruction and rehabilitation of railways, land transport infrastructure and harbors, building channels and irrigation facilities;

12. We supported demonstrated commitment of Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU and welcomed plans of the incoming Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union to contribute to strengthening regional cooperation and realization of important regional projects. We welcomed the Conference on the Western Balkans to be organized with the European Commission in Brussels in December. We tasked the RCC to remain actively engaged in this initiative;
Advancement towards European and Euro-Atlantic Integration

13. We share the view that European and Euro-Atlantic integration based on respecting the principles of democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms, regional cooperation and good neighborly relations among the SEECP Participating States can highly contribute to the lasting peace and stability in our region. We welcomed two SEECP Participating States joining the Alliance at its Sixtieth anniversary Summit. We also acknowledged the NATO’s determination to extend an invitation to a third SEECP Participating State, as soon as a mutually acceptable solution on the name issue will be reached within the framework of the UN. We welcomed the application of one Participating State to start the Membership Action Plan with NATO and expressed our hope that the MAP status to this Participating State shall be given as soon as possible. We underlined the interest for further development of cooperation between NATO and the PfP countries from the SEECP area;

14. We are convinced that the policy of enlargement is a powerful instrument, which serves the strategic interests of the European Union and the countries concerned - consolidating stability, security and sustainable development of the region. Believing that the enlargement perspective shall be left open for all concerned SEECP Participating States, we expect that negotiations or processes aiming at full membership will continue unabated;

15. We are looking forward for the entering into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, as soon as it is ratified by all the EU member states. We are confident that the new Treaty will strengthen the EU institutions and policies and will enhance its enlargement policy;

16. We are convinced that SEECP together with RCC should keep and enhance fruitful collaboration with EU Presidencies so as to maintain the South East Europe among their priorities during the terms-in-office;

17. We welcomed the European Council Declaration on the Western Balkans from 20 June 2008, recognizing that considerable efforts have been made to render the European perspective of the Western Balkans more tangible and visible to people across the region;

18. We welcomed the Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges for 2008-2009 which reaffirms the full support of the EU for the European perspective of the Western Balkans and confirms the continuation of the EU enlargement process, in line with the Thessaloniki Agenda. We commended one Participating State for its considerable progress towards the final stage of accession negotiations. We also commended the progress of the accession negotiations with one Participating State. We expressed hope that the conditions set by the EU for one remaining EU candidate will be met for accession negotiations to start. We welcomed the launching of the technical procedure concerning the EU membership application of one Participating State and expressed hope that the process shall be finalized as soon as possible. We welcomed the entry into force of the SAA with one Participating State on April 1, 2009, as well as its application for EU membership. We expect that the ratification of the SAA of two Participating States will advance. We welcomed the signature of the Stabilization and Association Agreement and the Interim Agreement with one Participating State. We expressed hope that Interim Agreement implemented by one Participating State will enter into
force soon and that the process of ratification of the SAA with the same Participating State will start and be finalized hopefully by the end of this year;

19. We welcomed the preparation of the negotiations between the European Commission and one Participating State on a new and ambitious Agreement, which will also include the aim of a deep and comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. We also welcomed progress in the implementation of the ENP Action Plan between the EU and that Participating State. We also underline the importance and the will to further continue the European integration process on the basis of European values and standards, good neighborly relations, common interests and individual performances;

20. We welcomed the implementation of the visa facilitation and readmission Agreements between EU and six Participating States, underlining the need to further facilitate the visa proceedings, observing the spirit of the Agreements in force. Additionally, we welcomed the recent progress in the visa liberalization dialogue with five Participating States and we expressed hope that by the end of 2009 the EU would take decision regarding the establishment of the visa free travel regime with those that will meet the EU requirements. We also welcomed the results of the Meeting of Heads of the Consular Services of the SEECP Participating States held in Chisinau on 24 April 2009, as a part of the process aiming to contribute to a more simplified visa regime within the region;

21. We expressed hope that soon EU and one Participating State will start the dialogue on visa liberalization in order to identify and implement the EU requirements to fulfill the necessary criteria;

22. We underlined the importance of the Instrument for the Pre-Accession assistance in order to ensure support for candidate and potential candidate countries in their efforts to meet the necessary accession criteria and prepare for assuming obligations for the EU membership. We welcome the EU assistance through IPA for the Western Balkans, in addressing the consequences of the financial and economic crisis. We appreciate the active participation of the Regional Cooperation Council in the process of developing regional projects under IPA Program in line with the priority areas;

23. We called upon the European Commission and RCC to continue to work on the modalities of cooperation with all SEECP Participating States in the priority areas of development in the region;

**Enhancement of Regional Cooperation within the SEECP and RCC framework**

24. We reaffirmed the regional ownership principle and the leading role of the SEECP;

25. We welcomed the successful launching of the Regional Cooperation Council and beginning of operations of the RCC Secretariat in Sarajevo and its Liaison Office in Brussels;

26. We stressed that further development of regional cooperation is of common interest and recognized the importance of the enhanced role of the region on that path. We expressed our conviction that regional cooperation and ownership, strongly supported by the European Union, other RCC Board members and international partners, remains of paramount importance for the development of the SEECP countries and the region as a whole;
27. We reconfirmed the inclusive character of regional cooperation processes in South East Europe and stressed the importance of active participation and contribution of all RCC members from the region;

28. We praised the continuous strong support of the EU and its institutions to the RCC as its key interlocutor in promoting regional cooperation;

29. We expressed our full support for the launching and results of the networking mechanism between the RCC members from South East Europe, the RCC Secretariat, with the involvement of European Commission and relevant International Financial Institutions, establishing a viable framework for the coordination and follow-up of the most important projects in the priority domains of activity. We recognized the importance of the Multi-beneficiary Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance Programme in developing regional projects and encourage all stakeholders to continue utilizing the RCC networking mechanism in this context;

30. We assessed the development of the energy and transport sectors as the basic pillars of the infrastructure of the region. The implementation of the Energy Community Treaty and the negotiation of a Multilateral Agreement between the EU and Western Balkans on the establishment of the Transport Community in Western Balkans are important elements for regional sustainable economic growth, and for encouraging foreign investments. In this regard, we welcomed positive achievements in the implementation of the Energy Community Treaty in South East Europe, as well as the progress in the accession negotiations with Participating States;

31. We support the RCC in facilitating the establishment of the South Eastern and Central Europe Catastrophe Insurance Facility (SECE-CRIF), aimed to counter the effects of floods, earthquakes and droughts in the region by developing a catastrophe insurance market, thus providing a budgetary relief;

32. We support the RCC in facilitating the establishment of the South East Europe Firefighting Regional Centre (SEEFREC) aiming at coordinating firefighting related activities of the RCC members from South East Europe and setting up a joint operational structure and common efforts addressing forest fires disasters in the region;

33. We welcomed the establishment of the fully operational CEFTA Secretariat in Brussels, which should contribute to the fostering trade and implementation of relevant economic policies, for reducing obstacles to trade and investments and opening up markets, as appropriate;

34. We fully support the pivotal role of the RCC in streamlining and coordination process of the regional task forces and initiatives in SEE and offer full support of the SEECP on that path;

35. We praised the successful implementation of the Strategic Work Program of the Regional Cooperation Council 2008-2009, in line with its basic documents, as well as the implementation of the objectives of the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office;

36. We declared our firm and unequivocal support for the work of the RCC Secretariat and Secretary General Mr. Hido Biščević and we call upon him to continue the work in achieving the defined regional priorities and objectives;

37. We endorsed the Strategic Work Program of the Regional Cooperation Council for 2009-2010 and the Annual Report of the RCC Secretary General;
SEEC P Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova

38. We appreciated the dynamic efforts of the Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova in contributing to the strengthening of the dialogue in the SEECP framework and promoting the regional cooperation in South East Europe;

39. We praised the Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova in contributing to the promotion and strengthening of regional cooperation process in the SEECP framework and in SEE region as a whole, by successful implementing the Program and Priorities of the Chairmanship mandate. We highly evaluated the wide range of meetings and events organized in line with regional priorities within the Chairmanship-in-Office mandate;

40. We put a particular emphasis on the conclusions and recommendations of the International Conference “Regional Cooperation – Opportunities, Challenges and Synergy”, which provided a significant value to the processes of better coordination of the goals, priorities and activities of the regional organizations, arrangements and initiatives;

41. We welcomed the results of the Meeting of the Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs, by signing the Memorandum on legal and judicial guarantees against unlawful processing of personal data and adopting the Common Declaration regarding the strengthening of cooperation in combating cybercrime. We urge on the relevant national authorities and RCC Secretariat to work together on the implementation of those documents;

42. We highly appreciated the achieved results of the Meeting of the Heads of the SEECP Supreme Audit Institutions “South East Europe SAIs: Developments and Prospects” and the International Conference “Ways to Improve SAIs Activity within the European Vector Framework: Experience and Practices of the South-East European SAIs”; International Conference for the Central and Eastern Europe, Balkans, Caucasus and Baltic States “Science and Education Policies”; Joint Meeting of the SEECP Political Directors and Directors responsible for EU Affairs from the SEECP Participating States; Meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs; Meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Health; Informal Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs; Meeting of the Heads of Consular Services of the SEECP Participating States; 2nd Meeting of the SEECP Competition Authorities; Meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Foreign Affairs; as well as the Meetings of the Committee of Political Directors of the SEECP Participating States;

43. We took note of the Final Report on the activities of the Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova and called upon the next Chairmanship-in-Office to continue the launched activities and processes;

Incoming Chairmanship-in-Office

44. We expressed our highest appreciation for the effectiveness of the present Chairmanship-in-Office and the utmost gratitude for excellent organization of this 12th Meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the SEECP in Chişinău;

45. We welcomed the incoming Chairmanship-in-Office of Turkey and its Priorities and Program, and decided that the next SEECP Summit will be held in Istanbul, in 2010. At the same time, we gladly accepted the proposal of Montenegro to take over the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office in 2010-2011.

Adopted in Chisinau on 5 June 2009
ANNEX XI

“Future through Cooperation”

Chisinau Joint Statement of the Heads of State and Government of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP)

Chişinău, 5 June 2009
Forging Partnership for Cooperation and Development

We, the Heads of State and Government of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP);

Having reviewed the current situation in South East Europe and beyond at this decisive point in time and fully aware of the historical opportunities opening up to our countries and peoples;

Determined to exercise reinvigorated leadership and genuine cooperation in order to consolidate the achievements reached so far in our region and continue to move the South East Europe further towards the European mainstream;

Reiterating our full adherence to the completion of integration of South East Europe in the European Union and most of the countries into the Euro-Atlantic structures;

Determined to spare no efforts in forging partnership, solidarity and cooperation in addressing the global economic and financial crisis and its impacts to South East Europe;

Mindful of economic, natural and human potentials of our region and resolute to find the best ways to utilize them in order to accelerate regional development and respond to the current crisis effects;

Aware of the key role of genuine cooperation in facilitating dialogue, strengthening peace and stability, building trust and realisation of joint development projects thus contributing to fulfilment of our common goals;

Forging Partnership for Cooperation and Development

We reaffirm that the accession to the European Union (EU) remains our key goal and we are convinced that the European perspective of the region shall be kept high on the agenda of the EU and its institutions. We believe that Euro-Atlantic integration for those opting for it shall also add to the stability, security and cooperation in our region.

We underline the importance of consolidating stability and security as well as strengthening of cooperation in South East Europe for building a free, democratic and united Europe;

We are dedicated to strengthen shared responsibility and mutual understanding in solving outstanding issues in the spirit of dialogue, compromise, mutual respect, equality, good neighbourly relations and in line with the principles of international law and our commitment to the European Union;
We have confidence that the EU will continue to advance the European perspective of the entire South East Europe;

We are determined to continue working together and assisting each other on the implementation of the European agendas. We will speed up the EU accession related reforms. We are committed to strengthening democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms and good neighbourly relations;

**Partnership for Development and Prosperity**

We reaffirm our determination to promote concrete joint actions in responding to the effects of the current global economic crisis. Aware of the necessity to add a regional component to our national policies, we support elaboration of measures, initiatives and projects in order to enhance economic activity and strengthen competitiveness at national and regional levels keeping at the same time the pace of economic reforms as well as openness of our markets;

We welcome the comprehensive conclusions of the G 20 Summit of 2 April 2009 in London hopeful they will produce desired effects on the world economy. We strongly support the efforts of the EU and the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) aimed at assisting our region to respond to the crisis. In this respect we invite the EU and IFI’s to continue to elaborate strategies and measures which will help strengthening strategic economic sectors in the region;

We recognize that the scope of the crisis calls for innovative, far-reaching and effective response and reaffirm our interest to consult on large-scale regional development projects, especially in the field of energy, infrastructure and transport, jointly and in cooperation with the EU and international institutions, as well as interested partners close to the region;

We call upon the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) to establish a high-level expert panel aimed at stimulating in-depth discussion on economic and financial measures in response to the crisis by acting in a coordinated manner at the regional level and in consultations with the EU institutions and other international partners.

**Partnership for Strengthening of Rule of Law**

We underline the importance of the rule of law for the overall prosperity and security, strengthening democracy and human rights. In this light, we emphasize the necessity to uphold and ensure full respect of the rule of law throughout South East Europe;

We recognise the rule of law as a paramount factor in the creation of the environment for secure economic and social activities and investment that are so crucial in responding to the current crisis and acceleration of reforms in order to generate development throughout the region;

We confirm our willingness to continue vigorously cooperating with the EU and other international partners in ensuring good governance, transparent legal framework, fight against corruption and organized crime throughout the region;

We are determined to work together to ensure that practices in the field of the rule of law including all its administrative, legislative and judicial aspects, are in compliance with relevant EU standards. We will ensure that the administrative capacities of our institutions, where necessary, will be upgraded and enhanced in order to ensure the unimpeded implementation of the rule of law in all its aspects.

*Adopted in Chişinău, on 5 June 2009*
I. Introduction

The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) has completed its first year of full operational ability. It was conceived as a novel structure of regional cooperation in South East Europe resulting from the progress that the region has accomplished with regard to its economic, social and democratic development and advancement on the path of European and Euro-Atlantic integration. The RCC was launched in order to sustain the principle of regional ownership and enhanced regional cooperation and place the responsibility for its future into the hands of the region.

Promoting and enhancing cooperation in the priority areas, namely, economic and social development, infrastructure and energy, justice and home affairs, security cooperation, building human capital and cross-cutting issues and parliamentary cooperation, the RCC also supports the European and Euro-Atlantic integration and creates a political climate susceptible to carrying out projects of a wider, regional character to the benefit of its each individual member.

South East Europe and in particular Western Balkans, as candidates and potential candidates for the European Union (EU) membership, are steadily advancing with their EU accession-related efforts and reforms. All countries of South East Europe have, to date, achieved institutional links with the EU, in line with their respective status in relation to the EU. Regional cooperation has taken a genuinely and authentically new course. Both aspects of the development in South East Europe need to be consolidated and invigorated. This is particularly important against the backdrop of the EU enlargement policy and strategy. This is, also, additionally vital as the region is still faced with a number of unresolved and open issues affecting the completion of durable stability in South East Europe and also impeding the EU accession efforts. In addition, current economic crisis has brought in potentially adverse effects on further political and social stabilization, whilst economic slowdown may additionally influence the development agendas in the region.

Overall there have been notable strides forward in the past year. Albania’s Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU entered into force as of April 2009 and it submitted the application for the EU membership at the end of April 2009. Bosnia and Herzegovina signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU and the Interim Agreement entered into force. The Interim Agreement with Montenegro is also being implemented and this country submitted an application for membership in the EU in December 2008.
The Council of the EU has recently tasked the European Commission to prepare an opinion on this country's application for EU membership. The presidential and municipal elections in The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, held in March/April 2009 met most of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe standards and this development contributes to the fulfillment of conditions set for this candidate country to open accession negotiations with the EU. The Republic of Moldova achieved progress in the implementation of the EU-Moldova European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) Action Plan and started preparing for negotiations on a new agreement on cooperation with the EU.

On the other hand in respect to the European integration, the advanced progress of Croatia’s EU accession negotiations received a setback due to the dispute regarding unresolved border issue with Slovenia. Serbia has yet to achieve progress allowing for the entry into force of the Interim Agreement and start of the ratification process of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU.

The accession of Albania and Croatia to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in April 2009 is a major step forward which will give a new shape to the stability landscape of South East Europe. The Alliance is furthermore determined to extend an invitation to join to The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as soon as a mutually accepted solution to the name issue is found within the framework of the United Nations (UN). The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX Kosovo) successfully deployed and started its activities. The dialogue on visa liberalization between the EU and five countries of the region which will result in lifting the visa obligation when conditions in individual roadmaps have been met presents a positive development. It is expected that relevant decisions will be taken by the end of 2009 that some of the countries will have met the requirements in their road map and the visa requirement will have been lifted as of 2010, bringing about a tangible achievement primarily for the benefit of the citizens.

Bilateral relations between the countries are on the rise as showcased by a number of high-level bilateral visits throughout South East Europe. Steps taken by leaders of three political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina which should lead to meeting the conditions for this country’s further advancement on the European and Euro-Atlantic path should be welcomed and further encouraged.

On the other hand, an economic recession has set in both, developed and stable European economies as well as in more fragile, though dynamic and quickly emerging transition economies of Eastern and South East Europe. In addition to the recession, the beginning of 2009 was exacerbated by the gas transit dispute between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, underscoring the dependence of South East Europe on energy imports from a sole energy source. However, the latter event mobilized solidarity and raised awareness of the area of South East Europe to the strategic importance of acting jointly in tackling such an important and crucial issue as energy security.

In such circumstances, the RCC carried out its substantial activities with a view to creating an atmosphere for the region to double its efforts to keep the European partners, international organizations and international financial institutions (IFIs) as well as other partners engaged, by applying the necessary EU accession related reforms, enhancing regional cooperation and mutual assistance, and taking a pragmatic and flexible stance towards open bilateral issues in the spirit of cooperation, understanding and good neighborly relations.
This Annual Report of the Secretary General of the RCC covers the period after the adoption of the Strategic Work Programme of the RCC for the period 2008-2009 at the end of May 2009 in Pomorie. The Annual Report is submitted to the RCC Board for the adoption and, subsequently, it shall be presented to the RCC Annual Meeting (Chisinau, 4 June 2009) for review and endorsement, both in accordance with the Statute of the RCC. It outlines the main activities and achievements of the RCC in carrying out the objectives set in the Strategic Work Programme for the period 2008-2009 in the first year of its full operational capacity. It also lays out the overall background and crucial developments impacting and shaping the activities of the RCC in the past year.

In mid-2008, the transition from the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe to the RCC was fully completed by setting up the RCC Secretariat in Sarajevo. Its Liaison Office in Brussels was officially launched in October 2008 although operational from the end of August 2008, after the signing of the Headquarters Agreement between the Kingdom of Belgium and the RCC Secretariat. The staffing of the RCC Secretariat is about to be completed with the commencement of work of the Expert on Infrastructure and Energy as of beginning of June 2009. The mandate of the Special Envoy of the RCC Secretary General for the Relations with the Presidency of the Council of the EU was activated in mid July 2008. An RCC Communication Strategy was put in place and duly implemented.

The efforts of the RCC focused on key priorities for further economic and social progress in South East Europe, further promotion of democratic values and reforms, support to the realization of the European perspective, including the consolidation of institutional dialogue with the EU institutions, promotion of the region of South East Europe as a reliable partner on the international arena and consolidation of its own structure and role. Consolidation and greater efficiency of regional processes and initiatives in joint cooperation of the RCC members from South East Europe, EU and institutions, relevant international organizations and IFIs as well as other interested partners lay at the core of its activities.

II. Political, Institutional and General Aspects of the RCC Secretariat’s Activities

1) Consultations with the RCC members and other regional and international partners

The Secretary General of the RCC carried out a series of political consultations with Heads of Government and Ministers of Foreign Affairs and other high-level officials of the RCC members from South East Europe. The talks were aimed at securing the continuing commitment and support of the RCC members from South East Europe to regional cooperation and the RCC in the implementation of its Strategic Work Programme 2008-2009. The discussions revolved around promoting and strengthening regional cooperation in South East Europe in the RCC priority areas with a view to further fostering the European integration prospects of the entire region.

The interlocutors also assessed the overall political situation in South East Europe, emphasizing that with new security challenges and setting in of the world financial crisis with an economic slowdown, political leaders of South East Europe needed to approach open issues with a sense of added urgency and firmly continue with reforms, strengthening self-responsibility to ensure stabilization and avoid lagging behind. The political leaders from the region expressed appreciation for the role of the RCC in fostering regional cooperation and committed to strengthening regional ownership.
The political outreach to the RCC members from South East Europe brought to the attention of the Heads of Government and Ministers the importance of enhancing the role of National Coordinators for the RCC within national structures. In practical terms, it is the role and responsibility of National Coordinators for the RCC to coordinate domestic institutions in the process of generating and elaborating ideas and project proposals for regional cooperation within the RCC framework. Such an enhanced role of RCC National Coordinators came to the fore in the framework of the networking mechanism that the RCC launched and which will be described later.

The RCC Secretary General continued the process of engaging the partners from outside South East Europe in dialogue on the modalities of regional cooperation. He held political consultations with senior officials in majority of the RCC members and donors in capitals such as Berlin, Berne, Budapest, Dublin, London, Madrid, Paris, Prague, Stockholm, Vienna and Washington. He also maintained dialogue with heads of international organizations and IFIs including NATO, the World Bank, OSCE, Council of Europe, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Council of Europe Development Bank, as well as with the relevant institutions of the EU, including the Presidency of the EU Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament. The dialogue with transatlantic partners confirmed the intention to maintain presence in South East Europe, an area of national interest. Alongside strengthening the principle of regional ownership, it is still very important for the international partners to remain substantially engaged in South East Europe and assist the region in realizing its development goals through regional cooperation.

A particular point of concern of many interlocutors was the participation of the Kosovo authorities in the RCC activities. Appreciating the importance of participation of Kosovo authorities in regional development projects, as a project-oriented regional cooperation body, the RCC abided by its statutory provisions, according to which Kosovo authorities participated within the framework of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) on behalf of Kosovo in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolution 1244, under an UNMIK/Kosovo tag.

Political consultations of the Secretary General of the RCC with all the stakeholders, primarily those from South East Europe, revealed full political support for regional cooperation and ownership from the highest political level. This support needs to be sustained and translated into concrete action on the working and expert levels.

With regard to its outreach activities, a practice of lectures and/or visits of senior officials of the RCC members, from the region or from other partner countries and organizations and institutions, to the RCC Secretariat was introduced. The public lecture of the Member of Bundestag and State Minister in the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany, Gernot Erler was the first step in this direction. The joint visit of three Ministers of Foreign Affairs of EU Member States, representing current, incoming and previous Presidency of the EU Council, namely, Karel Sczhwarzenberg of the Czech Republic, Carl Bildt of Sweden and Bernard Kouchner of France, was another major confirmation of the importance the EU attaches to the RCC. It is expected that this will raise the visibility of regional cooperation within the RCC framework among the public throughout the region. In addition to this, the intention is to promote the RCC Secretariat as ownership of all its members which should be used and supported.
2) Cooperation within the RCC Board

The Board of the RCC, a body providing operational guidance and supervision in between Annual Meetings of the RCC, held four sessions in the reporting period, on 6 October and 12 December 2008 and on 5 March and 14 May 2009. The meetings demonstrated that the Board functioned successfully despite differences in positions of some members. The Board was additionally strengthened by the active participation of all its members. The voice of South East Europe was clearly heard during the meetings pinpointing to the region taking the matters of regional cooperation increasingly into its hands. Such activity and engagement of the countries of South East Europe is particularly encouraging in light of the need to sustain and reinforce regional ownership principle.

The varying dynamics on the domestic front as well as in bilateral relations in some of the RCC members from the region did not impede regional cooperation. The full agendas of the meetings of the RCC Board were indicative of activities picking up more and more and entailing additional challenges and demands on both, the RCC National Coordinators and the RCC Secretariat. In the past year the RCC brought its efforts to the level of more substantial work on development projects in the five priority areas. Close cooperation and synergy between the RCC Board members and the RCC Secretariat was essential in achieving this goal.

The headway achieved within the RCC framework in the course of the reporting period was challenged to some extent by the question of attendance of the delegation of UNMIK/Kosovo at the meetings organized within the RCC framework in Sarajevo. There were difficulties concerning the issuing of entry visas to the members of the delegation of UNMIK/Kosovo on the part of the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina as the host country to the RCC Secretariat.

The RCC Secretariat took appropriate steps to ensure the attendance of all the members in its activities and worked with the members of the RCC Board as well as with the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina on securing conditions for unhampered and inclusive regional cooperation in accordance with its statutory documents. Absence of any RCC member from the discussions, activities and decision-making could have a negative impact on regional cooperation and undermine the overall achievements. This is why creating conditions for the development of regional cooperation in South East Europe remains an obligation of all RCC members, as outlined in the Joint Declaration on the Establishment of the RCC and the RCC Statute.

3) Process of networking among RCC National Coordinators from South East Europe, RCC Secretariat, European Commission and relevant IFIs

In keeping with the Strategic Work Programme of the RCC 2008 – 2009, a process of networking between the RCC National Coordinators from South East Europe, the RCC Secretariat, the European Commission and relevant IFIs was launched by the Secretary General of the RCC. Three meetings of RCC National Coordinators from South East Europe were held, in June and November 2008 and February 2009. In its initial stage this process addressed specifically National Coordinators from RCC members from South East Europe but, in order to ensure full coordination and efficiency of available programs and projects, it is intended also to involve other main players with an interest in South East Europe, namely the European Commission and IFIs. So far the response from these partners to the initiative has been positive and the process will be expanded to representatives of the European Commission and IFIs as the next step.
The objective of this initiative is to establish a framework for the identification and follow-up of the most important project ideas as well as for streamlining and future permanent networking between the RCC members from South East Europe (represented by the RCC National Coordinators), experts in the RCC Secretariat and representatives of relevant services of the European Commission and IFIs with regard to the identified regional priorities.

So far this process has produced the following tangible results:

- An analytical document produced by the RCC Secretariat outlining the priorities of the region within the framework of the five priority areas of the RCC entitled “Overview of Regional Cooperation Priorities – Level of Harmonization of National Activities and Strategies with the Strategic Work Programme of the RCC 2008 – 2009 as well as with the Multi-beneficiary Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) Programme 2008 Priorities”, based on inputs from RCC members from South East Europe,
- A list of Project Ideas for Multi-beneficiary IPA Programme 2010 developed in the five priority areas of the RCC submitted to the European Commission for funding from the Multi-beneficiary IPA Programme,
- A list of Project Ideas for Other Donors, as well as
- A Preliminary List of Events in 2009.

Taking into consideration the complexity and demanding character of this process as well as its novelty and usefulness in identifying priority areas for generating regional projects, its first steps are encouraging. It has inherent added value for promoting the principle of genuine regional ownership and mobilizing the potential for sustainable regional cooperation in South East Europe. This form of cooperation is complementary to the MB IPA process since it addresses the whole area of South East Europe.

4) Cooperation with the EU and its institutions

One of the objectives of the RCC in the past year was to achieve and consolidate constructive and fruitful cooperation with the EU and its institutions in view of the overarching ambition of its members from South East Europe to be integrated into the European structures. In addition to that, the EU is one of the largest stakeholders in the RCC, contributing one third of the RCC Secretariat’s annual budget. In order to maintain a quick link and an open communication channel with all the Brussels-based European and Euro-Atlantic institutions, the RCC Secretariat established its Liaison Office in Brussels, operational since the end of August 2008 and officially launched in October 2008.

Along similar lines, in order to ensure close and continuous cooperation between the RCC and the Presidency of the Council of the EU, including the incoming Presidencies, with a view to promoting the objectives of the RCC in the context of regional cooperation in South East Europe and the region’s European perspective within the Agendas of the Presidencies, the RCC Secretary General decided to establish the position of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General of the RCC for Relations with the Presidency of the Council of the EU. The mandate of the Special Envoy was activated in mid-July 2008.
The Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General/Head of Expert Pool of the RCC as well as the RCC Secretariat’s Liaison Office in Brussels and the Special Envoy of the Secretary General of the RCC for Relations with the Presidency of the EU Council maintained regular contacts and dialogue with the representatives of the European Commission, in particular with the Directorate-General for Enlargement of the European Commission, at all levels. They also maintained contacts with other relevant services of the European Commission responsible for areas of relevance for the work of the RCC as well as with all the institutions of the EU including the European Parliament, the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, the EU Presidencies and Member States.

Intensive activities were undertaken in order to keep the former French, current Czech and the incoming Swedish EU Council Presidencies engaged and focused on South East Europe. Major efforts were invested in regularly liaising and discussing all important aspects of regional cooperation as well as raising the awareness to developments in South East Europe and to the need for urgent action and accelerated implementation of the envisaged EU measures for the region. Contacts were initiated and consultations held with representatives of the EU Presidencies in 2010, Spain and Belgium. These contacts confirmed that individual EU Presidencies would build on the conclusions and results of their predecessor and gave assurances of a continued engagement within South East Europe.

In his communications addressed to the former French, current Czech and incoming Swedish EU Presidencies, the RCC Secretary General stressed the necessity of the EU paying attention to South East Europe and regional cooperation structures it strived to foster as well as the importance of continuing with the European enlargement for the candidate and potential candidate countries. As one of the most dynamic emerging markets in Europe, South East Europe should be assisted by the EU and its institutions, through adequate assistance and support in relation to the efforts undertaken by the governments of South East Europe to carry out EU accession related reforms. The RCC Secretary General asked for the support of the EU in the elaboration of financial and other measures that could assist the Governments of South East Europe, both individually and collectively, in alleviating the crisis consequences.

The RCC Secretary General discussed with the incoming Swedish EU Presidency the preparation and holding of a conference on the Western Balkans to be organized by the Swedish Presidency of the EU Council and the European Commission in Brussels in December 2009. The conference will address issues related to the impact of financial crisis on the region, on the progress of the enlargement process as well as on regional cooperation, with a particular emphasis on the fields of energy, transport and development of infrastructure. The RCC and the European Policy Centre shall actively participate in the preparation of this important event.

In addition to that, the RCC Secretariat has established active cooperation with the European Commission, in particular with the relevant services of the Directorate-General for Enlargement, in the framework of the programming of the Multi-beneficiary IPA Programme and the identification of possible regional projects to be submitted for financing under this important pre-accession assistance instrument. The RCC Secretariat’s representatives led by the Deputy Secretary General/Head of Expert Pool participated regularly in the IPA Multi-Beneficiary Coordination Meetings, one of which was hosted by the RCC Secretariat in Sarajevo in October 2008. This cooperation was utilized as an
opportunity to commence the process of discussion among IPA beneficiaries and the RCC Secretariat on the development of possible models for elaboration of relevant projects to be potentially financed under the Multi-beneficiary IPA Programme. As a result of the discussions with the RCC National Coordinators from South East Europe on the one hand, and within the Multi-beneficiary IPA coordination meetings on the other, an RCC Project Portfolio containing 18 preliminary project ideas was produced and submitted to the European Commission in March 2009.

Networking between the RCC Secretariat, the European Commission and relevant IFI’s has been strengthened through regular participation of the Deputy Secretary General of the RCC/Head of Expert Pool and Experts of the RCC Secretariat and its Liaison Office in Brussels at the meetings of the International Financial Institutions Advisory Group (IFI AG). These meetings provided the RCC with an opportunity to inform about its activities, new initiatives and projects. They also enabled an insight to the RCC into the priorities of other stakeholders and possibilities to formulate coordinated approaches and strategies for the benefit of the region.

The practice of attending high-level meetings of the EU related to the region of South East Europe (EU – Western Balkans Ministerial Forums in the formats of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Ministers responsible for Justice and Home Affairs) as well as briefing the EU Council Working Group on Western Balkans (COWEB) on the RCC activities and efforts was established and consolidated. These occasions enabled the RCC Secretariat representatives to present the most important current RCC activities and future plans, underlining the need for making visible results in the context of regional cooperation and the EU integration process. This exercise proved its merit in establishing additional channels of communication and cooperation between the RCC framework and EU Member States most of which are members of the RCC. The RCC Secretariat’s Liaison Office also assisted in the organization of COWEB presentations of the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Return Initiative (MARRI) and the Southeast European Police Chiefs Association (SEPCA).

The RCC Secretary General held two meetings with the Member of the European Commission responsible for Enlargement Olli Rehn, in October 2008 and March 2009 in Brussels in order to discuss the modalities of cooperation as well as the involvement of the Commission in regional cooperation through the RCC framework.

These contacts secured the high-level support of the Commission for the pragmatic and project-oriented approach of the RCC in addressing the priority areas which enables the countries of South East Europe to work together on development projects notwithstanding their still evident differences. This support was very much needed both for strengthening and sustaining genuine regional cooperation processes as well as for the establishment of a mechanism of permanent cooperation among the RCC Secretariat, the RCC members from South East Europe, the European Commission and IFIs, in preparing joint multinational regional projects. The region will additionally be assisted by the efforts of the European Commission and the IFIs to respond to the current social and economic difficulties in South East Europe, in particular regarding funding of the Crisis Response Package under IPA in the amount of 150 million EUR with additional 80 million EUR allocated under the IPA Multi-beneficiary 2009 for support to SMEs, energy efficiency and competitiveness as well as to bank sector supervision and regulation.
The measures and activities of the European Commission illustrate in concrete terms that the EU is committed to continue its engagement in South East Europe and the Western Balkans and deliver on the European perspective of the candidate and potential candidates.

Summing up the relations with all the institutions of the EU, we can say that the cooperation with the EU served as a platform for keeping the EU focus on the region of South East Europe particularly in the light of the global economic and financial crisis and other external and internal challenges the EU is facing. The consultations were also used for exchanging views on the ways for achieving visible results in the context of regional cooperation and the EU integration process as well as on the possibilities for cooperation between RCC and the EU, particularly for organizing joint RCC-EU Council Presidency events etc. As a result several major joint RCC-EU Council Presidency activities were agreed and organized (a Ministerial Conference on Developing Regional Research Strategy for Western Balkans held during the Czech Presidency of the EU Council, a conference on the impact of financial crisis on the region, the progress of the enlargement process as well as on regional cooperation, with a particular emphasis on the fields of energy, transport and development of infrastructure, to be organized during the Swedish Presidency of the EU Council).

Along these lines, the EU Council Presidencies’ officials and other partners expressed positive assessment for the RCC Secretariat working activities and its engagement and consistently confirmed their full support for its future work directed towards fulfilling its regional cooperation and regional ownership priorities and goals.

The current Czech and incoming Swedish Presidency of the EU Council have confirmed that the region of South East Europe and particularly Western Balkans, shall be among the priority agenda items during their terms-in-office and that they will make substantial efforts for supporting concrete regional cooperation projects and for opening avenues for accelerating the EU integration processes, as well as for making tangible progress in the visa liberalization processes. Both EU current and incoming EU Council Presidency have made clear their intention to continue with the practice of inviting the RCC Secretary General to important events to be organized during the Presidency’s term-of-office and to provide high-level participation at the most important events organized under the auspices of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) and the RCC. High-level officials of Spain confirmed that they were going to build on the achievements and programs of their predecessors with regard to South East Europe and regional cooperation.

The general assessment is that the EU Council Presidencies have demonstrated their will and determination to invest concrete efforts in supporting regional cooperation in South East Europe and in accelerating the process of EU integration of the countries concerned. However the real and tangible progress will depend on the countries’ reforms achievements, not forgetting the other very complex external and internal challenges the EU is facing. It is encouraging and promising that the EU Council Presidencies are keeping considerable focus on South East Europe and the Western Balkans by providing concrete support for the RCC activities and by assisting its efforts for attaining the set goals and priorities.
Finally, it could be concluded by saying that by pursuing active cooperation with the institutions of the EU, especially in identifying priorities to be addressed by the Multi-beneficiary IPA Programme and developed into regional projects, the RCC profiled itself as a key interlocutor and partner of the EU for matters relating to regional cooperation.

5) Cooperation with the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office

The SEECP is the political umbrella of the RCC and the political voice of the region. According to the Strategic Work Programme of the RCC 2008 – 2009, in consultation with the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova, the RCC assisted with preparing and coordinating the activities of the SEECP. The Secretary General and other members of the RCC Secretariat participated actively in all the SEECP activities including the Summit and ministerial meetings such as the Meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Foreign Affairs, SEECP Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs, SEECP Ministers of Health, Informal Meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Meeting of the SEECP Speakers of Parliament and other high-level conferences as well as meetings of the SEECP Committee of Political Directors. In order to achieve synergy and efficient follow-up to the conclusions of the high-level meetings, the RCC maintained regular dialogue and political consultations with the Moldovan SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office. The RCC will continue to work closely with the SEECP Chairmanships-in-Office in order to harness all available regional resources in an effort to propose joint strategies and mechanisms for addressing the challenges, especially the economic crisis and its possible impact on the political and social stability.

6) Regional presentations of the RCC and its activities in the capitals of the RCC members from South East Europe

The RCC Secretariat successfully carried out a number of presentations in RCC members from South East Europe in order to present its priorities, projects and activities to over 500 representatives of governments, business sector and civil society. This was an important opportunity for networking between the RCC Secretariat and national experts as well as for raising public awareness through media coverage of the events. The tour was organized in close cooperation with the RCC members from South East Europe and witnessed intensive interaction of the participants highlighting many ideas and proposals. A presentation for the institutions of the EU and other Brussels-based institutions is scheduled for 23 June 2009.

7) Coordination and streamlining of regional initiatives and structures

In accordance with the RCC Strategic Work Programme 2008 – 2009 and the Statute of the RCC, one of the tasks of the RCC Secretariat was to work on the establishment of structured and transparent relationships with taskforces and initiatives in South East Europe, with particular emphasis on the five priority areas of the RCC activities. The establishment of such structured relationships is aimed at the avoidance of duplication and overlapping of activities and has received support both from the RCC members from the region as well as from European and other international partners.

This process was launched by the Coordination Conference of South East Europe Initiatives on Justice and Home Affairs, held in Sarajevo on 15 and 16 September 2008. Another coordination meeting of relevant initiatives in South East Europe in the field of security cooperation was organized jointly by the RCC Secretariat and RACVIAC-Centre for Security Cooperation on 4 December 2008. After its meeting on 5 March 2009, the
RCC Board exchanged views with representatives of the regional taskforces and initiatives which are operating under the RCC auspices or have regulated appropriate relationship and coordination of activities through specific arrangements with the RCC Secretariat. A list of initiatives and task forces is annexed to this Report.

In the same vein, the RCC started the process of institutional affiliation with regional initiatives relevant for the future effective activity of the RCC through signing of Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) or other forms of more targeted or topical formalized cooperation. So far, a MoU or similar agreement has been signed with the following initiatives: South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) and the South East European Health Network. Agreements have been concluded and are ready to be signed between the RCC Secretariat and Southeast European Cooperative Initiative Regional Center for Combating Trans-border Organized Crime (SECI Center), Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI), MARRI, SEPCA and South Eastern Europe Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG).

Coordination and streamlining of regional taskforces and initiatives in South East Europe remains one of the most important tasks of the RCC Secretariat. The RCC Secretariat will also remain actively involved in providing assistance to the taskforces and initiatives in gaining access to political, technical and financial support required to fulfill their objectives.

8) Cooperation with other regional organizations, initiatives and structures

The RCC pursued cooperation with regional organizations, initiatives and structures such as the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII), the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the Central European Initiative (CEI), to name some of them. Since the geographic and thematic focus of these organizations and initiatives and the RCC overlap, it was deemed of importance and usefulness to explore possibilities for strengthening and streamlining cooperation. The preliminary discussions resulted in some joint activities and projects elaborated in more detail in the section of this Report on the RCC priority areas as well as participation in each other's high-level meetings. A MoU regarding cooperation between the RCC Secretariat and the CEI -Executive Secretariat was signed in May 2009 pursuant to the corresponding decision of the RCC Board.

9) Communication Strategy

The Communication Strategy of the RCC Secretariat, adopted by the Secretary General in April 2008, was designed to build the RCC public profile and shape the organization’s place among the people and stakeholders in SEE. The goal is to establish understanding and awareness of the RCC mission to promote 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. The communication has been tailored to demonstrate that joint strategic goals of the RCC members from South East Europe and their specific needs are mutually inclusive.

Concretely, the strategy comprised of: 1. establishing and maintaining regular contacts with journalists to encourage them to report on RCC activities in as positive a light as possible, as well as using various means of communication with them, such as press releases, statements, interviews, articles, press conferences, background meetings and briefings; 2. opening up thematic roundtables, conferences and seminars to the media;
3. providing and taking opportunities for outreach on RCC activities among the politicians, opinion-makers, think-tanks, students, academia, businessmen, etc.; 4. creating, in May 2008, and maintaining informative and updated RCC website to reach out to various publics via Internet; 5. designing and producing public information and visual identity materials, such as factsheets and flyers; 6. preparing and disseminating reports and other documents to targeted stakeholders; 7. organizing special events for the media and other publics, such as lectures by prominent public figures, panel discussion to mark the first RCC anniversary on 27 February 2009, annual reception, etc.

In implementing the communication strategy, the RCC Secretariat carried out its contacts with the public and the press in a friendly and open manner, bearing in mind the good reputation the RCC wants to build across the RCC area, as a leading organization for development issues in South East Europe, which will make a visible difference. Thus, seriousness, professionalism, openness and transparency have been instrumental to achieving the set ambition.

III. Priority Areas of the RCC Activities

The five priority areas, representing the main direction of the RCC Secretariat’s work are economic and social development; infrastructure and energy; justice and home affairs; security cooperation and building human capital and cross-cutting issues, including parliamentary cooperation. Under each of these objectives the RCC Secretariat, in particular its Expert Pool, focused on the following activities:

1) Economic and Social Development

General

During the first six months of its activity, the RCC Secretariat focused on developing working relationships with regional socioeconomic initiatives inherited from the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, as well as on making contacts with existing and potential international partners in the socioeconomic development realm. Thereafter, an annual work plan for the year 2009 was prepared and an initial project portfolio developed. They include topics ranging from public-private partnerships, female entrepreneurship and regional competitiveness, to employment policy and social dialogue. Throughout this period, the RCC Secretariat solidified its relationship with regional and international partners by co-hosting joint events.

Investment Facilitation/Business Climate

In the area of investment facilitation/business climate, the RCC Secretariat developed a strong working relationship with the OECD Investment Compact for Southeast Europe as well as the International Finance Corporation (IFC) Business Enabling Environment program. In September 2008, the RCC Secretariat hosted the OECD Investment Reform Index (IRI) 2009 kick-off meeting, where experts of the OECD briefed the economic teams of the RCC members from South East Europe on the intent and methodology of the new IRI – an event which received extensive media coverage throughout the region. The RCC Secretariat, working in collaboration with the OECD, also launched the OECD’s new study “Defining and Strengthening Sector Specific Sources of Competitiveness in the Western Balkans,” in October 2008. The study comprises the first phase of the European Commission-funded/OECD-implemented Regional Competitiveness project.
The RCC Secretariat contributed to the development of the second (implementation) phase of the project by preparing a comprehensive overview of the ministries from South East Europe engaged in economic and human capital development, and their current initiatives aimed at improving competitiveness, upgrading skills, and developing an information society. The RCC Secretariat also entered into dialogue with IFC regarding the prospect of embracing its Network of South East Europe Policy Makers under its umbrella.

Following extensive discussions with a wide range of local and international partners (the Ministry of Transport Communications of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UN ECE, the World Bank Institute and the Croatian Agency for Public Private Partnerships) in the second half of the year, the RCC Secretariat made preparations for a ministerial level regional conference on Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) scheduled to take place in September 2009. Focusing on the prospects for developing strategic infrastructure networks, the conference will explore how PPPs might serve as a framework for attracting foreign direct investments (FDI). Three outcomes are expected: the garnering of political support for the PPP approach, the launching of a regional PPP expert network, and the promotion of a regional PPP capacity building program – a project in which the Croatian PPP Agency has volunteered to play a leading role.

The RCC Secretariat carried out the necessary research to produce a substantive conference agenda, secured the participation of all key international actors, successfully raised funds for the conference from a partner organization (UNDP), and has also developed a follow-up roadmap together with the Croatian Agency for PPPs. A co-hosting arrangement with the Ministry of Finance and Treasury of Bosnia and Herzegovina is expected to be secured in the near future.

**Trade**

In the realm of trade, the work of the RCC Secretariat contributed to the establishment of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) 2006 Secretariat in Brussels in the summer of 2008.

In the month of October 2008, the RCC Secretariat actively participated in the first Regional Economic Forum of Parties to CEFTA 2006 organized under the auspices of the governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro as well as of UNMIK/Kosovo. The RCC Secretariat’s proposals for enhanced regional cooperation – a number of which pertained to trade – constituted well over half of the conclusions of the Forum, which subsequently identified the RCC as one of its most significant contributors. Forum conclusions were sent to 900 addresses of the institutions and organizations operating in the parties to CEFTA 2006, including those directly responsible for regional cooperation.

**Private Sector Dialogue**

Throughout the year, the RCC Secretariat maintained close contacts with the South East Europe Business Advisory Council (BAC) attending its regular meetings and sharing information of regional economic developments and the needs of the business community. In March 2009, a representative of the RCC Secretariat accompanied BAC’s business missions to Tirana and Podgorica. The attractiveness of the public private partnership model for future infrastructure development was clearly communicated at the time by
Albanian and Montenegrin officials, and the RCC Secretariat intends to engage BAC as a private sector spokesperson at the ministerial PPP conference it intends to organize in September 2009 - thus helping governments to understand the private sector’s requirements vis-à-vis potential entry into PPP arrangements. BAC in turn assisted the RCC Secretariat in making the relevant international contacts necessary for the successful organization of the conference.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Working in close cooperation with the UNDP, which hosts the Secretariat of the Electronic Southeast Europe (eSEE) initiative, the RCC Secretariat assumed an active role in the preparation of the initiative’s quarterly meetings and hosted one of them in October 2008. This particular event was an opportunity to emphasize a number of implementation priorities from the eSEE Agenda Plus. Discussions are currently under way with the UNDP funded Secretariat of the eSEE initiative regarding the preparation of the next eSEE Ministerial Conference expected to take place toward the end of 2009. There is a pressing need to redefine some of the objectives and deadlines originally envisaged under the eSEE Agenda Plus – the initiative’s implementation road map – which is expected to take place in the context of this high level event.

The meeting was held in conjunction with that of the Programme Advisory Committee of the new Centre for eGovernance Development (CeGD) to which the RCC Secretariat has lent extensive operational support since its establishment in the spring of 2008. The RCC Secretariat played an active advisory role vis-à-vis CeGD which faced a number of challenges in its relations with some key stakeholders. The RCC Secretariat also provided extensive assistance to CeGD in developing its annual program proposal aimed at securing funding for the Centre. The proposal subsequently met with success. The RCC Secretariat experts on Economic and Social Development have since become members of CeGD’s Supervisory and Management Board, respectively, and provided substantive contributions to the Centre’s operational procedures, strategic program, and annual work plan. A number of events foreseen in the work plan have been delivered.

In April 2009, the RCC Secretariat, together with the UNDP and Greece’s INA Academy organized a one-day seminar on eGovernance attended by interested regional parties, mainly from government ministries. The RCC Secretariat has also made arrangements to host a workshop on the role of ICT in harnessing the potentials of South East Europe’s scientific diaspora with Austria’s Centre for Social Innovation. This event is scheduled to take place in June 2009.

Employment

The RCC Secretariat received its first exposure to the South East European Employment Network in June 2008 at which time it became clear that the Network was in a transitional phase. The declining engagement of international partners (who wish to see greater regional responsibility for the Network) necessitated RCC leadership. A major challenge for the RCC members from the region is to actively cooperate on the implementation of the conclusions of various past ministerial declarations as well as the International Labour Organization (ILO) sponsored Country Reviews of Employment Policy (CREPs).

The RCC Secretariat initially counted on strong technical support from relevant international partners, however, this has not been forthcoming, and attempts to organize a meeting of relevant international stakeholders failed. The RCC Secretariat subsequently determined
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to prepare a work plan for the Network on its own. This is currently in progress and will be shared with international stakeholders prior to the Employment Network meeting which the RCC Secretariat plans to organize at the end of May 2009. The meeting, which is meant to revive the now latent Employment Network, will aim to have this proposed roadmap approved by its regional stakeholders (Labor Ministries and Employment Agencies) and to provide a long delayed opportunity for regional actors to share their employment-related accomplishments and challenges over the past year.

Social Dialogue

The onset of the global financial and economic crisis created a window of opportunity to bring regional employers’ and trade union organizations around the idea of direct dialogue. The RCC Secretariat has been consulting with both sides concerning a regional social dialogue meeting to be held at the end of May 2009 where the two organizations would get an opportunity to agree on a set of joint crisis-related policy proposals which the RCC could endorse and forward to regional governments. The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung from Germany will be a partner in the preparation of this event.

Health

The past year was one of transition for the South East European Health Network which actively pursued the signing, by all its parties, of a MoU on the future of the Network, which paves the way for its regional ownership via a regionally located secretariat. The MoU was finally signed by all parties in the first quarter of 2009, and the Network will undertake the next steps in issuing a call for proposals for the seat of its secretariat. The RCC Secretariat will assist in the selection of the location through participation in a future selection committee. A MoU concerning the Network’s future relationship with the RCC has also been signed committing the RCC to politically support the Network. It does not envisage direct fund-raising support for the Network’s projects, but the RCC Secretariat will consider including some regional health programs into its portfolio to be shared with interested donors.

2) Infrastructure and Energy

General

During the initial part of the reporting period, the RCC Secretariat focused on stock taking, preparation of the Strategic Work Programme 2008-2009 and taking over of responsibilities from the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (two handover meetings took place in Brussels and Sarajevo). The RCC Secretariat participated in the International IFI Advisory Group (IFI AG) Working Group on Energy and gave its contribution to profiling the Conclusions of the Group. Recognizing the role of sustainable use and management of water resources, the RCC Secretariat established communication with the International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC) and agreed on the future cooperation and joint preparation of the relevant events.

Regarding the bilateral communication with the RCC members from South East Europe, the RCC Secretariat assisted the Ministry for Foreign Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina concerning the development of Energy Strategy and the accession to relevant regional energy organizations as well as the Ministry for Development of Montenegro in relation to the establishment of an Energy Efficiency Agency and accession to relevant energy organizations.
The RCC Secretariat concentrated on strengthening relations with the key infrastructure partners i.e. Energy Community Secretariat (ECS), South East Europe Transport Observatory (SEETO) and Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) in order to support an integrated approach, multidisciplinary projects and complementary up to date activities. In that respect, the organization of a transport event dedicated to road safety primarily with UN ECE and SEETO was discussed. Additionally a preliminary concept for a Parliamentarians’ workshop that would gather representatives of regional parliamentary committees dealing with energy issues, alongside the ECS active participation was initiated.

During the reporting period all relevant initiatives, task forces and other partners were offered to cooperate in order to prepare Preliminary Project Ideas (PPIs) to be supported through Multi-beneficiary IPA or other potential donors explaining the requirements for these applications.

Due to a multidisciplinary character of the infrastructure activities in relation to both preparation of the events and relevant PPIs, a variety of stakeholders have been contacted and included in its developing alongside the active participation of the European Commission.

Environment

During the last quarter of 2008, activities of the RCC Secretariat focused on cooperation with the REC. This cooperation primarily related to the preparation and realization of The First Thematic Ministerial Conference “Combating Climate Change in South East Europe” in Sarajevo on 14 November 2008 within the agreed framework program Roadmap for Environmental Cooperation in South East Europe. In addition to this event, within the previously mentioned framework program, three thematic high level events were planned to be tentatively co-organized on a quarterly basis and hosted by the RCC Secretariat, namely: Natura 2000 in South East Europe, Multilateral cooperation on environmental issues through Multilateral Environmental Agreements in South East Europe and Priority environmental infrastructure investments in South East Europe. The RCC Secretariat hosted and contributed to a positive output of the Preparatory Expert Meeting that preceded the Ministerial Conference as well as of the Ministerial Conference that resulted in the adoption by the Ministers responsible for Environment of the Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the Republic of Serbia and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, of a Joint Ministerial Statement and Climate Change Framework Action Plan for Adaptation.

The RCC Secretariat also participated in various regional events as a result of the established communication and agreed efforts to enhance regional cooperation (UN ECE “Energy Week”, Priority Environmental Investment Program (PEIP) Regional Meeting for Senior Officials from South East Europe and Donors). Participation in the UN ECE “Energy Week” was used for additional consultations with the UN ECE Transport and Environmental Divisions’ representatives in relation to the RCC Secretariat’s intention to organize events in the area of transport and transboundary water cooperation, respectively.
Cooperation with the REC included the preparation of PPIs in relation to an Inventory of pressures and impacts in the Drina River Basin and transboundary cooperation in the Sava River Basin as well as the Set up of the accident emergency warning system within the Drina River Basin. These PPIs are being prepared in accordance with the Multi-beneficiary IPA Programme template requirements in order to be eligible for the Multi-beneficiary IPA support.

Cooperation with the UNECE Water Convention Secretariat, the Global Water Partnership and the Sava Commission focused on the preparation of a Water Conference held on 18-20 May 2009 that included the following parts: (i) a part on strategic issues for the whole of transboundary waters in the region including three themes (the legal and institutional basis for cooperation, climate change and its impacts on water related sectors, and multipurpose use of transboundary waters - how to reconcile different interests); (ii) a part to work on the second assessment of transboundary waters where participants will be divided in three groups (Adriatic, Black Sea, Aegean Sea) and discuss issues basin by basin; and (iii) a concluding part on the way forward with a summary of the workshop and perspectives from the European Commission and donors (World Bank, Global Environment Fund (GEF) etc.). While added value of the second part would be to ensure concrete output that would be presented at the fifth meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention in November 2009 and finally at the next Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”, the first and the third part would be primarily important to back regional cooperation and learn more about the position of donor community and IFIs to support regional cooperation and related projects, respectively.

Collaboration with the UNDP Regional Office correlated to the preparation of the PPIs concerning biodiversity protection and ecosystem services as well as to the establishment of a Regional Forum and the implementation of the part of the Climate Change Framework Action Plan for Adaptation that relates to coastal zone and tourism.

**Transport**

Taking into account the EU policy towards inland waterways development and SEETO future plans to increase the role of this transport mode, the RCC Secretariat met Sava Commission and World Bank representatives in order to support the full realization of a Detailed Design for Sava River Waterway. Participation in the Sava Commission Workshop on Environmentally Sustainable Management and Maintenance of the Inland Waterways was a part of the overall RCC Secretariat’s activities to give more importance to inland waterways as an economically effective and environmentally friendly mode of transport.

The RCC Secretariat contributed to the Workshop on the Follow-up of the Joint Statement on Inland Navigation and Environmental Sustainability in the Danube River where the integrated approach when planning and developing infrastructure projects, particularly transport ones, was emphasized as well as to the Railway Reform Workshop where the approximation and harmonization requirements for the SEETO participants in the area of Railway Network Access were presented.

The RCC Secretariat participated in the Partnership for Improvement of Danube Infrastructure and Navigation - 7th Danube River Technical Meeting with main objectives to overview new developments concerning policies and decisions regarding Danube-wide sustainable development and strategies and to review and update the status of ongoing
Danube projects and proposals. During the event the RCC Secretariat stressed the need for promoting an integrated approach when planning and developing Danube infrastructure projects primarily establishing cooperation between ECS, SEETO and REC.

Energy

Taking into account huge infrastructure investment needs in the region, particularly in relation to the power sector and the necessity to speed up decision-making process concerning new electricity investments, the RCC Secretariat took part in the Energy Community Investment Conference. The RCC Secretariat participated in some other official events organized by the Energy Community Secretariat as well. These events included meetings of Energy Community institutions (Energy Community Gas Forum, Energy Community Electricity Forum, Permanent High level Group and Ministerial Council).

As a follow up of the Staff-to-Staff meeting with the UN ECE experts held in the beginning of June 2008, concrete cooperation on the preparation of the energy efficiency project proposal started with the representatives of the UN ECE EE21 Project, Network of Associations of Local Authorities in South-East Europe (NALAS), European Foundation for the Sustainable Development of the Regions (FEDRE) and Regional Network for Efficient Use of Energy and Water Resources for Southeastern Europe (RENEUER). The RCC Secretariat invited the ECS to join in this endeavor considering that it should have a vital role in the regional energy project proposals development and monitoring its implementation. ECS offered the UN ECE to present a project proposal when fully developed at one of the incoming Energy Efficiency Task Force meetings.

The representatives of the RCC Secretariat participated in the workshop under the title of Local Sustainability and Actions in South East Europe. This was part of the overall efforts to enhance cooperation with the local authorities and civil society actors in the areas of infrastructure and energy considering that the “bottom – up” approach provided through this cooperation is extremely relevant to complement efforts on higher levels. Participating in the above mentioned workshop, the RCC Secretariat’s representatives gave lectures, presented the organization and discussed possible areas of cooperation with other participants in the workshop.

The RCC Secretariat initiated a meeting between the UN ECE and the ECS representatives pointing out their complementarities, mutual benefits and possibilities for cooperation particularly concerning local energy development, municipal energy planning and energy efficiency. Participation in the Energy Community Energy Efficiency Task Force meetings was also used to promote dealing with municipal energy projects that have huge potential for replication both nationally and regionally and that can guarantee energy security alongside climate change mitigation only if massively implemented.

The RCC Secretariat and the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina organized the workshop “Parliaments – Support to Harmonized Energy Reforms in Southeast Europe” in Sarajevo on 15 December 2008. The workshop brought together parliamentarians from the parliamentary committees dealing with energy issues from South East Europe and representatives of the European Commission, International Energy Agency (IEA), UNDP, ECS, World Bank and UN ECE. The event discussed energy issues in a comprehensive way and broader context of the challenges South East Europe is facing and proved that such events are very important for raising the awareness of the needed
energy reforms, facilitating law making process and supporting the parliamentarians to oversee their governments’ activities. The event concluded that it was essential to organize a sequence of tailor made workshops for representatives of Parliaments and their technical support services focusing on specific energy sector needs and priorities of RCC members from South East Europe. In that respect, it was agreed with the ECS representatives to prepare up to three events during 2009 that would address specific requirements of parliamentarians from the region concerning the energy sector reforms and social implications of these reforms. Taking into account the schedule of elections in the RCC Members from South East Europe, the RCC Secretariat approached Serbian Parliament in order to start the sequence of events.

The RCC Secretariat participated in the 12th Energy Community Permanent High Level Group meeting and backed ECS plan to deal more with energy efficiency and renewables ("greening" the Energy Community).

GTZ Open Regional Fund for Energy in South East Europe representatives were contacted in order to support development of preliminary project ideas in the area of energy, particularly energy efficiency and renewables that would be submitted for support to other donors and the Multi-beneficiary IPA.

Due to the recent gas crisis the RCC Secretariat was contacted to share its position on the energy crisis, energy security, energy efficiency and climate change and invited to participate in meetings and other events in order to deliver presentations and contribute to discussions (Regional Energy Security and Energy Efficiency Conference, Energy Crisis and Climate Change – Challenges for Politics and Business in South East Europe and 63rd Session of the UN ECE).

Based on the existing CEI infrastructure - already established network of CEI National Energy Focal Points, continuous cooperation between the RCC Secretariat and the CEI will result in launching an initiative on sustainable energy development in the region after the signing of a MoU on cooperation between the RCC Secretariat and the CEI - Executive Secretariat. At the possible next stage of the initiative development other relevant stakeholders would be included as well.

3) Justice and Home Affairs

General

The level of harmonization of national activities with the RCC Strategic Work Programme 2008-2009 and the EU Multi-beneficiary IPA Programme priorities has been assessed during the June 2008 Meeting of the RCC National Coordinators from South East Europe. The evaluation identified as priorities for the RCC members from South East Europe and the regional organizations and initiatives active in the field of Justice and home affairs the following areas: strengthening legal and judicial cooperation in criminal cases; harmonization of national legislations; synchronization with the European and international tools of criminal procedure; rapid exchange of information between the competent authorities; better use of SECI Center's capacity for greater coordination of the investigating authorities.

The state of affairs in each of the six regional organizations and initiatives in the field of justice and home affairs has been analyzed at the initiative of the RCC Secretariat. In order
to identify measures enhancing their coordination and coherence, as well as to avoid overlapping, fragmentation and duplication, the RCC Secretariat organized in September 2008, in Sarajevo, the First Coordination Conference of the Regional Initiatives and International Organizations active in Justice and Home Affairs area in South East Europe. The ‘Matrix’ of the regional organizations and initiatives active in justice and home affairs in South East Europe is posted on the RCC website. At the EU – Western Balkans Ministerial Forum on Justice and Home Affairs held in Zagreb in autumn 2008, the French Presidency of the EU Council marked the important role that the RCC played in facilitating the implementation of international and regional legal framework on police, law enforcement and judicial cooperation, streamlining of regional organizations, and harmonization of national legislations in the field of criminal law with the EU regulations and standards.

Based on the above mentioned assessments and analyses, in close cooperation with the European and other international partners, the RCC Secretariat was actively pursuing actions improving the process of cooperation among national authorities, streamlining and raising the visibility of the relevant regional initiatives, enhancing their contribution and performance on judicial cooperation.

The RCC Secretariat contributed to the establishment of a structured regional mechanism, a system of direct, quick and constant circulation of information, which integrates cooperation needs of national law enforcement agencies, police departments, prosecution offices and judiciary with those of regional and international organizations. This integrated mechanism of cooperation and coordination at EU, regional and national levels, able to influence and speed up the accession process should be fully functional by the end of 2009.

Apart from regular meetings at high political level in the justice and home affairs area, expert-level cooperation has been enhanced; the activity of liaison police and custom officers, the prosecutors’ networks have been improved; a holistic approach on enhancing regional cooperation among police, law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges has been addressed; a number of regional project ideas have been drafted in close coordination with national authorities and regional organizations; consultation are underway relating to the drafting of a South East Europe Multiannual Regional Strategy on Justice and Home Affairs.

The RCC Secretariat is currently addressing the following three processes as regional priorities: harmonization and implementation of the legislative framework (“acquis communautaire”); institutional and functional standardization; enhancing the forms and methods of cooperation.

Agreements have been concluded and are ready to be signed between RCC Secretariat and SECI Center, RAI, MARRI, SEPCA, SEEPAG, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

The RCC Secretariat is directly supporting the implementation of three regional normative documents: SEECP Ministers’ of Justice Memorandum on Legal and Judicial Guarantees against Unlawful Processing of Personal Data and SEECP Ministers’ of Home Affairs Common Declaration regarding the Strengthening of Cooperation in Combating Cybercrimes, both adopted in Chisinau in 2008 as well as Police Cooperation Convention signed in Vienna in 2006.
The RCC Secretariat is involved in ongoing projects such as: EU Project on the Establishment of International Law-Enforcement Coordination Units (ILECU Project); Anti-corruption Consultancy and the Integrity and Resistance to Corruption of the Criminal Judicial System in South East European Countries, both in cooperation with RAI; the continuation of the implementation of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) I-24/7 Border Checking Point as a component of the Bled Stolen Vehicle Process; incorporating the work on Anti-corruption in OECD Investment Reform Index 2009; Visa Regime Assessment among SEECP Participating States – a Project proposed by the Moldovan SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office with MARRI partnership.

Through its partnership in ILECU Project, the RCC Secretariat became an active player in the process of harmonizing national legislations in the field of criminal law, and synchronizing the use of the European and international tools of criminal investigation and prosecution.

**Combating organized crime**

The RCC Secretariat experts and representatives of SEPCA and SECI Center participated and had informative presentations in meetings such as COWEB and EU Horizontal Working Group on Drugs in 2009 in Brussels.

In key areas, such as criminal justice and transnational organized crime, the RCC Secretariat worked closely with the UNODC to promote the rule of law and cooperation among RCC members from South East Europe. The UNODC Regional Programme 2009-2011 “Promoting the Rule of Law and Human Security in South East Europe”, was launched during the Regional High Level Conference organized in Belgrade in March 2009. The RCC Secretariat, RAI, SECI Center, SEPCA and SEEPAG are strategic partners in the implementation of the activities envisaged by the Regional Programme in the three main thematic areas: organized crime and illicit trafficking; justice and integrity; drugs and HIV.

In Belgrade the participating countries of South East Europe adopted a Joint Statement committing to work together and in close partnership with relevant regional and international organizations. The RCC Secretariat experts attended the UNODC meeting and workshop involving judges, prosecutors and law enforcement officers specialized in the area of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants.

Strengthening the role of the Bucharest – based SECI Center is one of the RCC strategic priorities. In 2009, the RCC Secretariat and SECI Center finalized the discussions to formalize the cooperation and to consolidate their relationship in the areas considered of great importance for combating organized crime, such as: Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SELEC) Convention signature, ratification and implementation; setting up of partnerships with the European Police Office (EUROPOL) and European Agency for the Management of Operation Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the EU (Frontex) on the basis of a provided legal text; strengthening the collaboration with the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), as well as with the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the INTERPOL; finalization of the Organized Crime Threat Assessment for South East European Region (OCTA-SEE); SECI Center’s access to the European Commission’s and other donors’ funds.
Prosecutors’ cooperation

The RCC Secretariat is working on the transformation of the South Eastern Europe Prosecutors’ Advisory Group (SEEPAG) into a more visible, effective and efficient network of experienced prosecutors, able to provide real operational support, legal assistance, advice and guidance to SECI Center’s liaisons officers in the investigation of trans-border organized crime.

To avoid overlapping, duplication and fragmentation at regional level, the RCC Secretariat experts, with the SECI Center’s and the Council of Europe’s assistance, was assisting SEEPAG and Prosecutors’ Network in South-Eastern Europe (PROSECO) to develop contacts and to initiate regional coordination.

The RCC Secretariat contributed to the organization of the 2009 Third World Summit of Prosecutors General, Attorneys General and Chief Prosecutors, held in Bucharest. The main theme of the Prosecutors’ General World Summit was: “Prosecutor General – Pillar of the Contemporary Criminal Justice System”. The world summit provided a unique opportunity for Prosecutors General to address, at the highest level, issues of specific interest or concern for criminal justice systems which are in the process of transition and reform. A permanent Secretariat of the Prosecutors General’s World Summit, financed by Romania, has been established in Bucharest and will closely cooperate with the International Association of Prosecutors (IAP), the UNODC and the RCC Secretariat. On this occasion, the Office of the Romanian Prosecutor General, IAP and the RCC Secretariat initiated consultations on organizing a regional annual meeting (conference or forum) of the Prosecutors General from South East Europe.

Fight against corruption

With respect to the fight against corruption the RCC members from South East Europe, assisted by RAI and the RCC Secretariat, increased their common engagement on prevention and countering corruption.

At the 2008 RAI Steering Group Meeting in Chisinau, senior representatives appointed by the Governments noted that all the countries ratified the UN Convention on fighting corruption and some of them already implemented its provisions into national legislation.

Corruption related to public and private sector has been addressed. RAI and the RCC Secretariat experts together with national representatives focused on the tools to detect and investigate corruption in public procurement, especially ‘red flags’ as a new instrument taken from the practice of international organizations and investment banks.

Strengthening the rule of law through improved integrity and capacity of justice systems have also been considered as essential prerequisites for effective protection of human rights and economic development. In 2009, the RCC Secretariat and RAI started the implementation of two projects approved by the RAI Steering Group: Anti-corruption Consultancy and the Survey on Integrity and Resistance to Corruption of the Criminal Judicial System in the Countries of South East Europe, which is financed by the United States of America.

The RCC Secretariat’s proposal on a Regional network of (independent) specialized anti-corruption agencies, a project idea developed by the RCC Secretariat and RAI, has been included into the Multi-beneficiary IPA Programme 2010 project cycle.
The RCC Secretariat continued to assist RAI in taking measures ensuring: sustainability, achievement of practical results, fostering the impact following the dissemination of anti-corruption best practice and lessons learned and identifying new priorities such as combating high level corruption more efficiently.

**Migration, asylum and refugees**

Legal and illegal migration, as the connection between migration and development, including the issue of brain drain, are considered strong regional priorities.

Peoples and governments in South East Europe attach great importance to the perspective of the visa regime liberalization. The progress in this area is dependent on the implementing of major reforms such as: strengthening the rule of law, combating organized crime, corruption and illegal migration, enhancing the administrative capacity in border control and documents security.

MARRI, assisted by the RCC Secretariat, enhanced its capacities to work closer with the European Commission, and to complement the EU efforts towards the visa facilitation process and furthermore to have the visa liberalization. In December 2008, MARRI had a presentation for the European Commission. In February 2009, MARRI, together with the representatives of the RCC Secretariat, was invited by the Czech Presidency to brief COWEB, where the relations between MARRI and the RCC were discussed as a very important and positive aspect.

The RCC Secretariat experts are advocating MARRI in achieving compliance with the European Commission IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme project “Migration and socio-economic development in the Western Balkans“.

The cooperation in the region has been strengthened; also the trust between EU agencies and law enforcement agencies of the countries of the region has increased. The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum should become a crucial instrument for the RCC members from South East Europe.

The 2009 Seminar on “Citizenship Legislation and Practices-Overview of the state of Affairs in MARRI Member States” organized in Tirana, attended by the RCC Secretariat and SEPCA representatives, stressed the common interest of the region to harmonize national legislation on citizenship with EU standards, and stated that MARRI activities contribute to the consolidation of regional cooperation in the area of migration.

**Police and law enforcement cooperation**

The RCC Secretariat participated in developing a new regional cooperation structure, the Secretariat of the Police Cooperation Convention (PCC) for South East Europe located in Ljubljana, which started its activity on 1 September 2008. The PCC Secretariat has been set up to organize the implementation and to draft guidelines, manuals and model agreements for the Convention to become effective. The PCC provides a comprehensive basis and an appropriate legal framework to police regional judicial operations. The RCC Secretariat actively supported the recognition of the PCC as an important legal framework for judicial cooperation.
A key objective for the RCC Secretariat related to SEPCA was to facilitate the continuation of the programs on Organized Crime Training Network (OCTN), the INTERPOL I-24/7 IT system connecting border control points, and the Crime Analysis project aiming to create national and regional exchange of data related to organized crime.

To secure the continuation of the Stability Pact’s initiative I-24/7 Main Border Checking Point Project, INTERPOL organized in 2008, in Lyon, a donor’s meeting with the participation of the RCC Secretariat and SEPCA. For the implementation of the project second phase the participants of the meeting requested the RCC to provide further support and to raise awareness in the ministries and parliaments of the beneficiary countries, and recommended that the World Bank and Association of European Insurance Companies should be approached.

Organized by the RCC Secretariat and SEPCA, the 2009 Stolen Vehicles Crime Conference gathered specialized police and border officers representatives from INTERPOL, EUROPOL, European and international organizations who shared information, exchanged best practices and discussed National Action Plans as well as future steps to be taken to improve national and regional regulations and activities in fighting stolen vehicle crime.

The RCC Secretariat together with the Austrian Ministry of Interior, and its partners, Slovenia and Romania, commenced the preparation for the implementation of the European Commission CARDS Regional Programmes 2005 regarding the establishment of the International Law Enforcement Coordination Units – National Focal Points (ILECUs). ILECUs Project involves as beneficiaries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Each ILECU will comprise EUROPOL, INTERPOL, SECI Center contact points, bilateral liaison officers, and police cooperation contact points according to the Schengen Convention, Sirene bureaux (preparedness only), Customs, Eurojust, European Judicial Network, Prosecutor’s Networks, Border Police, Frontex and OLAF.

The main RCC Secretariat objectives in ILECUs Project are: to maintain strong cooperation between the Western Balkan beneficiaries and the international organizations; to ensure ILECUs continuation, sustainability and thus its long-term existence; to secure the synergies with other projects and that no duplication of efforts will occur; to ensure that the legal basis formed by the provisions of the PCC is introduced in this project and close cooperation with SEPCA, SEEPAG and SECI Center is in place; to explore the extension of the Project to the Republic of Moldova.

The RCC Secretariat actively participated in the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Border Security Cooperation in Southeast Europe held in 2009 in Belgrade. The Conference, opened by the Serbian President, was attended by nine ministers of home affairs and other high-level representatives. Several documents were signed: Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina signed bilateral protocols on organizing joint patrols along their borders; Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina signed an agreement on joint border checks at border crossings; Montenegro and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia signed an agreement on dual citizenship; police representatives from Serbia and Hungary signed an agreement on cooperation between units for fighting organized crime. The Joint Declaration signed by the Ministers from South East European countries envisages to achieve, until 2012, full compliance with EU standards and the implementation of best EU practices.
The RCC Secretariat initiated direct cooperation with the Council of Europe in the field of Cybercrime. The RCC Secretariat’s experts attended the 2009 OCTOPUS Interface Conference, Cooperation against Cybercrime, organized in Strasbourg in March 2009. On this occasion, the RCC Secretariat and the Council of Europe have identified complementarities and synergies between the second phase of the Council of Europe Global Project on Cybercrime and the RCC Secretariat’s Cybercrime Project Idea.

Close coordination and periodical exchange of information between SEPCA and the RCC Secretariat have been established, giving SEPCA more visibility and assuring continuous political support. SEPCA plays an important role in police cooperation through projects and actions coordinated at the level of police managers.

The RCC Secretariat is encouraging regional coordination and focus on drugs research. Given the fact that there are no regional organizations in South East Europe dealing specifically with the issues of drugs demand and harm reduction, drug addiction and the social aspects of the abuse of narcotics, Croatia proposed the creation of a new initiative under the auspices of the RCC. The project proposal for setting up a Regional Office of „South East European Drugs Coordination“ (SEEDC), was elaborated in order to receive support and has been introduced in the RCC Projects Portfolio.

3) Security Cooperation

General

Having accomplished the smooth transition from the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe in respect of the functioning task forces and initiatives - Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Initiative for South Eastern Europe (DPPI SEE) and South Eastern and Eastern European Clearing House for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC), the RCC Secretariat focused on strengthening their regional ownership and identifying the needs for further deepening regional defense and security cooperation. A coordination meeting of initiatives active in the area of security cooperation in South East Europe was organized jointly by the RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation and the RCC Secretariat in December 2008. The meeting provided for a forum for discussion of activities and possibilities of enhancement of cooperation and coordination. DPPI SEE and SEESAC clearly expressed that they would continue operating under the umbrella of the RCC. RACVIAC-Centre for Security Cooperation affirmed its independence from the RCC framework, stressing at the same time readiness to cooperate with the RCC and its Secretariat.

The Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South Eastern Europe (DPPI SEE)

DPPI SEE went through a transition period with the aim to transform the DPPI SEE Secretariat into an entity affiliated to the RCC in accordance with the “Memorandum of Understanding on the Institutional Framework of the DPPI SEE”. The RCC Secretariat offered to the DPPI SEE full support - expert, technical and political - to develop a Strategy and Action plan, successfully addressing legal and administrative issues and developing Working procedures of DPPI SEE. The RCC Secretariat’s efforts concentrated on further institutionalizing the Initiative, building its capacity and expanding the supported programs and projects which reflect the expectations for transforming it in to an upgraded regionally owned centre for disaster preparedness and prevention. The RCC Secretariat provided
DPPI SEE with full support and facilitated contacts with international donor community. The development of working, mutually beneficial relations and complementary programs with other international institutions especially the EU, UNDP and the World Bank are a significant part of the RCC work. In this respect, in cooperation with DPPI SEE, the RCC Secretariat provided assistance to the UNDP in drafting a Regional Program on Disaster Risk Reduction in South East Europe – a grant application form submitted to the European Commission. The project aims to building capacity in disaster risk reduction through regional cooperation in South East Europe for the period 2009-2010.

Southeastern and Central Europe Catastrophe Insurance Facility (SECE-CRIF)

In cooperation with the World Bank and the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN ISDR), the RCC Secretariat took active part in the creation of a Southeastern and Central Europe Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (SECE-CRIF). SECE CRIF will be set up as a genuine public-private partnership whose main objectives are to facilitate the development of a catastrophe insurance market in South East Europe and thereby provide access for homeowners and SMEs to affordably priced (but not subsidized!) catastrophe insurance. It is envisaged that the program will start off by providing coverage to the countries of South East Europe but will soon extend its reach to countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Following two conferences on the establishment of the SECE CRIF, jointly organized by the World Bank, the UN/ISDR and the RCC Secretariat, seven RCC members from the region have expressed interest in the initiative – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro and Serbia. Interested countries will submit their comments on the draft founding legal documents to RCC Secretariat; undertake all necessary steps to prepare the CRIF founding documents for signature by the designated government representatives at a Global UN Summit on Disaster Risk Reduction in Geneva on 17 June 2009 and ratify the signed CRIF founding documents within 3-5 months from the date of their signing. The World Bank is looking into the possibility of establishing a special lending SECE CRIF regional facility that could help the member countries to finance their equity contributions to the project. The World Bank will, in cooperation with RCC Secretariat and UN ISDR, work closely with the European Commission and other donors to identify other potential sources of funding for countries’ equity contributions.

South East Europe Firefighting Regional Center (SEEFREC)

A project on establishing a South East Europe Firefighting Regional Center (SEEFREC) was developed in coordination with the DPPI SEE and supported by the World Bank and the UN ISDR. The project outline was sent to the RCC National Coordinators from South East Europe for consideration by the relevant national authorities. After receiving confirmation of preliminary interest for participation in the project from four RCC members from South East Europe, the Secretariat outlined the planned activities. The RCC Board will be asked to approve the project and the RCC Board members other than regional ones will be asked for their eventual interest to provide financial contributions to the SEEFREC project. A draft Agreement on the project will be prepared, with the assistance from independent contracted experts, possibly by the end of June 2009, to be presented to the participants in SEEFREC for their approval and adoption. On the basis of the contributions received from the RCC members from the region, the project will be further developed and discussed in detail at a Regional Conference which will be organized under the RCC auspices in July 2009. The positive outcome of this Conference will be followed by the Inauguration Conference of SEEFREC. The constitution of the Managing Board and beginning of the appointment procedures for SEEFREC are expected in autumn 2009.
Non-proliferation of small arms and light weapons

After signing the new agreement between the RCC Secretariat and the UNDP extending the scope of activities of the SEESAC and transforming it into a community violence prevention conceptual approach, a concrete project was drafted, signed and funded by Norway for 2009. Joint activities with SEESAC were planned and full support is offered to UNDP in further fundraising for this Initiative. In February 2009, in cooperation with UNDP, a selection panel was organized and a new SEESAC Team Leader selected and appointed. Upon request by UNDP and SEESAC, the RCC Secretariat has brought to the attention of the RCC Board the issue of the necessity of initiating the process for transforming SEESAC into a fully-fledged regionally-owned initiative by setting up an institutional mechanism for receiving financial contributions from the countries of the region and distributing them to the regional initiatives including SEESAC. This mechanism could be in the form of a trust fund where the countries from the region can transfer earmarked and non-earmarked funds for regional activities.

Defence and security cooperation

In cooperation with the Ministry of Defence of Bulgaria a joint initiative is being undertaken on organizing the first meeting of Defence Policy Directors and International Cooperation Directors of the Ministries of Defence of South East European countries that will take place in Sofia on 21 and 22 May 2009. Representatives of the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, as well as representatives from NATO International Staff are invited. This meeting intends to foster networking, building relationships, and strengthening trust as a basis for furthering regional security cooperation in the defence area. In an informal discussion delegations will be expected to identify requirements for enhancing transnational/multinational defence cooperation capabilities, to propose initiatives to meet possible expectations, and formulate techniques and capabilities to improve the region-wide transnational defense cooperation efforts. If the meeting confirms the interest of the RCC members from the region for the continuation of the dialogue of the Defence Policy Directors from South East Europe on a permanent basis, this will represent a platform and basis for the institutionalization of this format of meeting under the auspices of the RCC.

Consultations with the COWEB Coordinator in the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU and with the Director of Intelligence of the EU Council Military Staff continued through the RCC Liaison Office in Brussels. An outline of the first meeting of the Heads of Military Intelligence Agencies of South East Europe was agreed upon. The RCC Secretariat is in the stage of identifying an RCC member from the region to be the co-organizer and host of the event. At the next stage the project idea will be offered to the relevant institutions of the RCC members from South East Europe for consideration.

Consultations with relevant regional and international partners

Mutually acceptable and beneficial dialogue was established and further developed with the major stakeholders in the regional defence and security cooperation, in particular with South East European Defense Ministerial (SEDM), Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), NATO, OSCE and others. The RCC Secretariat’s efforts focused on avoiding possible duplication of activities which were well accepted and supported by all organizations with regional outreach. Specific proposals were made to SEEDM for cooperation in disaster management, defence industry conversion project development and the South-Eastern Europe Brigade (SEEBRIG) involvement in disaster relief operations in South East Europe.
3) Building Human Capital and Cross-Cutting Issues, including parliamentary cooperation

General

In the first months of the last year, the RCC focused its work on taking over from the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and continuing as well as advancing activities in respective fields. The RCC Secretariat managed to build a strong network of contacts both in the region and with international organizations and EU Member States. The activities were focused primarily on the field of education, research, science, and culture, while activities in parliamentary cooperation were also followed in accordance with its overarching standing.

Education

In the field of education, the RCC Secretariat established contacts with the Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital of the RCC chaired by Romania and co-chaired by Austria and Croatia. The RCC Task Force provides cooperation and coordination framework for its founding members in the field of human resources with different national institutions responsible for education in South East Europe as well as with the Education Reform Initiative of South East Europe. The RCC Secretariat is a member and participates in the meetings and coordinates its activities with the Task Force.

The RCC Secretariat is included in the Task Force Fostering Building Human Capital Mobility Program for Capacity-Building in Regional Cooperation Management. The first participant in this program visited the RCC Secretariat in the period 2-9 November 2008. The program is designed as a support measure to avoid potential lack of mid-level civil servants who are acquainted with and capable of managing regional activities and programs in education, science and research, and acting as contact points for the existing networks of cooperation.

The RCC Secretariat actively participated in Preparatory Meetings for the Conference on “Fostering and Building Human Capital for Sustainable Knowledge Societies of the South East Europe”, which was organized by the Task Force Building Human Capital in Bucharest on 6 and 7 March 2009. Conference participants were representatives of governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academic community from the region as well as from the donor community. The Conference provided an in-depth analysis of experience of building human capital in the region of South East Europe and challenges to be met, from the perspective of EU priorities and beneficiary societies. Special emphasis was given to the Regional Research Strategy for the Western Balkan Countries and integration of the Western Balkans to the European Research Area. Thematic workshops were held devoted to human capital contribution to regional development, effective policies for building human capital, fostering human capital for labor market needs, competitiveness and sustainable development.

Good cooperation was established with the European Policy Centre (EPC), which invited the representative of the RCC Secretariat to participate in the Balkans Forum Roundtable on Student Mobility in the Balkans held in Brussels on 12 February 2009. Following the European Commission’s Communication on the Western Balkans in March 2008, which emphasized visa facilitation and Erasmus Mundus scholarships as important tools for enhancing people-to-people contacts and reconciliation between the peoples of the
Western Balkans, the EPC Roundtable was devoted to student mobility and other inclusive policies that offer opportunities to young people, as crucial steps on the path towards closer integration with the EU.

At the IFI AG Working Group on Social Sectors held on 17 June 2008, the RCC Secretariat presented its main activities related to building human capital and took part in the discussion on related issues in the context of adopted framework of close cooperation between the RCC and IFI AG. Several new issues were raised like full participation of South East Europe in EU education benchmarking, establishment of independent regional forums of experts in some specific fields, facilitation of the emerging regional labor market etc.

The RCC Secretariat established excellent communication with the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA), discussed with various partners on the modalities of fostering cooperation with ReSPA, in the light of its full operationalization, envisaged for the autumn 2009. The RCC Secretariat contributed to the preparation of a Draft Curriculum for ReSPA, from the aspect of enabling professional training for national civil servants, in accordance with common priorities in the region of South East Europe.

Meeting with the Director of the South East European Entrepreneurial Learning Center (SEE ELC), Ms. Efka Heder held on 28 January 2009, was the opportunity to discuss the establishment of the SEE ELC, located in Zagreb, and venturing channels of communication and cooperation with the RCC and its Secretariat, in respect of adequate positioning of the SEE ELC and strengthening future cooperation among the regional stakeholders in the area of entrepreneurial learning.

On various occasions, The RCC Secretariat met with the representatives of the European Training Foundation (ETF), on which different programs and projects of mutual interest were discussed. The eventual establishment of the RCC-ETF Memorandum of Understanding was also mentioned whereby a framework of the document needs to be further discussed.

The RCC Secretariat established excellent relations with the Education Department of the OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Dynamic and lively discussions led to defining three main projects of mutual interest which will be jointly developed: Training of the Education Inspectors, with emphasis on the Bologna Process; Cross-border initiative among parent councils and school leaders. With the Center for Democratic Reconciliation in South East Europe, the Council of Europe and the OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the modalities of development of the project of Joint History Teaching Materials were discussed. Counterparts emphasized the importance of the project for the improvement of history teaching curriculum as well as for the overall reconciliation process in the region.

**Science and Research**

The RCC Secretariat has been involved in channeling the project idea on the establishment of a Regional Strategy for Research and Development for the Western Balkans, which has been endorsed by Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The project was presented at the Multi-Beneficiary IPA Programme Coordination Meeting, which took place in the premises of RCC.
Secretariat, 9-10 October 2008. The RCC Secretariat has been involved in the coordination of activities towards the development of a Draft Project and further promotion of the project idea. Communication with different stakeholders in the field of research has been strengthened and, in that light, an agreement has been made with the Czech Republic Presidency of the Council of the EU on the co-organization of the Ministerial conference - Developing the Regional Research Strategy for the Western Balkans. The Conference was held on 24 April 2009 in Sarajevo and resulted in the adoption of the Joint Statement on developing Regional Strategy for Research and Development for the Western Balkans outlining future steps ahead in this context.

The RCC Secretariat established close contacts with the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkans. The representative of the RCC Secretariat participated at the Meeting of the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkans, held in Paris on 18-19 December 2008. The Platform was co-chaired by the French Presidency of the EU Council, Serbia on behalf of the Western Balkan Countries, and the European Commission. The discussion on recent developments on Science and Technology for the Western Balkans, gave an overview of the different actions taken during the last six months. It also took note of the growing cooperation within the region and with the EU Member States and the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) Associated States. Western Balkan countries reiterated their interest in the establishment of a Regional Research and Development Strategy and expressed their interest in a better use of IPA funding to support the efforts necessary to design and implement integrated research policies. This synergy was considered as a critical aspect for further participation of the Western Balkans in the Research Framework Programme and their integration into the European Research Area.

At the International Conference for the Central and Eastern Europe, Balkans, Caucasus and Baltic States on Science and education Policies, held in Chisinau, Moldova, from 19-20 September 2008, the RCC Secretariat’s representatives exchanged ideas and thoughts with the key decision makers in national science and education policies from Central and South East European countries. The conference focused on strengthening international impact of national research and education programs, strengthening research in higher education, stemming and reversing brain drain and developing a knowledge-based economy.

**Culture**

The issue of culture was followed closely by the RCC Secretariat. Excellent cooperation was established between the RCC Secretariat and the Council of Europe, which organized a visit of the RCC Secretariat experts to the Council of Europe Secretariat in Strasbourg. With the representatives of three Directorate Generals a number of meetings were held, with particular attention to the activities related to building human capital and cross-cutting issues, such as culture and education. Specific programs were mentioned: Quality Assurance, Life Long Learning Programs, development of Joint History Teaching Materials, Ljubljana Process, Trust Based Societies, Civil Society, Youth etc. Excellent contacts were made and the cooperation will follow especially related to the issues of cultural heritage.

The RCC Secretariat participated at the Culture and Audiovisual Communication – Vector of Peace and European Future in the Countries of South Eastern Europe - conference
organized by the Ministry of Culture of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in Skopje bringing together representatives of respective national institutions and independent experts from South East Europe as well as representatives of international organizations active in this area, representatives of the European Commission (DG Education and Culture) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Office in Venice. Participants presented the main achievements and future plans in regard to strengthening cooperation in the field of culture, with the special emphasis on the project idea of Audiovisual Culture Magazine of 12 participating members from South East Europe. The main goal of the magazine is to bring people from the region closer through the cooperation in the field of culture.

**Parliamentary Cooperation**

For the parliamentary cooperation as an over-arching theme, the RCC Secretariat took over the agreed set of activities which were decided to be developed over the course of 2008. According to the needs and priorities expressed by the parliaments of South East Europe the events will be organized both for members of parliaments (MPs) and parliamentary staff.

Excellent cooperation has been established with the European Parliament in Brussels as well as with the Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation in South East Europe in Sofia in particular in the process of preparation of forthcoming events aimed to tackle the issues of harmonization of legislation with the EU acquis, visa issues, parliamentary budget and the law on budget, free trade and adaptation to the internal market.

The 8th meeting of the Cetinje Parliamentary Forum and the Fourth Conference of the European Integration Parliamentary Committees of states participating in the Stabilisation and Association Process (COSAP) held in Cetinje, Montenegro, on 27 March 2009, marked the rejuvenation of these two important regional activities in the parliamentary cooperation area. It is expected that both these forums will encourage the SAA countries to continue with the progress in the process of Euro-integration and carry out the necessary reforms which will strengthen the democratic and institutional capacity in their countries. Importance of regional parliamentary cooperation is the key point in both these activities and in that light, support is articulated to future activities and further institutionalization of the Cetinje Parliamentary Forum.

It has to be noted that the Regional Secretariat on Parliamentary Cooperation in South East Europe does not have enough human capacities and support from the parliaments of the region to deliver envisaged activities and therefore is in a very complex situation. In the previous period, with the assistance of the RCC Secretariat, the Regional Secretariat managed to elaborate a working plan. However, the working plan will be difficult to put into practice in 2009 in view of the limited administrative capacities of the Secretariat.

**Cross-cutting issues**

Civil society and youth have been placed high on the priority list of the activities of the RCC in the last year. The RCC recognized the importance of involving civil society, and especially young people of the region in all projects and programs the RCC Secretariat is carrying out. They represent a different view, an added value providing broader approach and all-encompassing impact of the undertaken activities. Special efforts are also directed towards building tolerance and reconciliation in the region through trust based society model, as well as enhancement of gender related programs.
IV. Summary

In the first year of its functioning, the RCC focused on the process of transition from the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, setting up of its administrative structures and consolidation of its functioning and activities. This period was marked by strong support of all the partners to the establishment of activities and independent functioning of the RCC. The stakeholders clearly embraced the principle of regional ownership and leadership as the way forward for the region of South East Europe. The process was fostered by a three-fold commitment, that of the region itself, the EU and other substantially interested international partners.

Despite some bilateral differences and outstanding issues, the RCC as a format proved successful for keeping the project-oriented cooperation and dialogue in South East Europe going and bringing together all the interlocutors around the same table. The region should be further encouraged to use the RCC framework as its own instrument of achieving economic and social development, strengthening stability and relaxing a potentially tense atmosphere. The RCC proved its purpose and role in promoting cooperation, dialogue and good-neighborly relations and facilitating European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

The RCC also profiled itself as a key interlocutor of the EU and the broader international community for matters of regional cooperation in South East Europe. It engaged in dialogue and communication with all the partners actively involved in South East Europe, which in turn acknowledged its unique role and function. The RCC framework can be further used by the EU, international organizations and financial institutions as well as donor countries for assisting the region through the difficult period of economic recession in order to fend off the risk of instability and deterioration.

In an effort to mobilize the potentials and resources of the region and to promote the development of sustainable regional cooperation in its own right, the RCC launched the process of networking between the RCC members from South East Europe, the European Commission and IFIs. The RCC possesses expertise and good insight into the priorities and opportunities for cooperation with all the relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries. The networking process resulted in the identification of priority areas on the part of RCC members from South East Europe, project ideas to be submitted for financing under the Multi-beneficiary IPA Programme and project ideas to be submitted to other donors.

The RCC Secretariat applied consistent efforts to bring closer its work and function to all the partners, especially those in RCC members from South East Europe by organizing presentations and outreach activities for government representatives, bodies and institutions, civil society, media, general public and academia. It also established institutional relations and coordination with as well as provided assistance to regional task forces and initiatives regarding access to political, technical and financial support required to fulfill their objectives.

In addition to that, in the past year the RCC initiated or facilitated several important regional projects in its five priority areas that will benefit both governments and ordinary citizens. Below are some of them:
In cooperation with the World Bank and the UN/ISDR, the RCC Secretariat has facilitated the creation of the South-Eastern and Central Europe Catastrophe Insurance Facility (SECE-CRIF).

A project outline regarding the establishing of a South Eastern Europe Fire Fighting Regional Centre (SEEFREC) was developed in coordination with the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South Eastern Europe (DPPI SEE) and supported by the World Bank.

A Climate Change Framework Action Plan for Adaptation was launched and signed by ministers in charge of environmental issues of the region.

A Regional Strategy for Research and Development for the Western Balkans was launched at a Ministerial Conference organized jointly by the Czech Presidency of the EU and the RCC Secretariat.

Launch of the Private Public Partnership as a framework of attracting FDI which will result in the establishment of a regional PPP expert network and a regional PPP capacity building program.

Launch of the OECD Investment Reform Index (IRI) 2009 and new study “Defining and Strengthening Sector Specific Sources of Competitiveness in the Western Balkans” as the first phase of the Regional Competitiveness Project.

Launch of a Water Conference aimed at laying foundations for regional cooperation projects addressing all the aspects of the issue of transboundary waters, including environmental protection, multi-purpose use of transboundary waters and so on.

Anti-corruption Consultancy and the Integrity and Resistance to Corruption of the Criminal Judicial System in South East Europe.

The facilitation of the Bled Stolen Vehicle Process aimed at improving national and regional legislations and activities in fighting stolen vehicles.

Cyber crime Units project developed with The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as a follow up of the Declaration of the SEECP Ministers of Home Affairs on the Strengthening of Cooperation in Combating Cyber-Crime.

Visa Regime Assessment among SEECP Participating States in cooperation with Moldova and MARRI.

Initiative to establish a Regional Network of (independent) specialized anti-corruption agencies.

RCC Secretariat delivered expert assistance to governments of the region in developing energy related strategies or institutions.

The results in political and project-oriented terms in the initial year showcase that the RCC as a new and novel mechanism of regional cooperation passed the test. The above mentioned successes were achieved in the face of a number of challenges. The economic downturn whose impact cannot fully be realized or appraised at the moment is one of the most serious challenges the region is facing. At the same time, fighting recession is largely occupying the EU Member States and risks diverting their attention away from South East Europe. Coupled with the experience and lessons learned of the last enlargement, this
development could be an important external factor in the further European integration dynamics of South East Europe.

In order to overcome the challenges of the economic recession and with outstanding bilateral issues affecting regional cooperation, it is in the best interest of South East Europe not to decrease its commitment to regional cooperation or stray away from pre-accession reforms. The presence and efforts of the EU are also essential for keeping stability at its doorstep and assuring that the region does not regress. By completing its institutional reform, the EU will strengthen its potential and effectiveness and stimulate the process of further enlargement.

Most importantly, the region must assume and deepen its share of responsibility. The governments of South East Europe should employ joint and concerted efforts in facing future challenges, speed up reforms in order to progress on the European and Euro-Atlantic path, cooperate on finding solutions to bilateral problems in the spirit of dialogue, compromise and good neighborly relations and engage jointly in large-scale development projects assisted by IFI’s funding that would remedy social consequences of the economic recession and give additional incentive to continued reforms.

All the partners in the RCC are invited to keep their commitment to clear strategies for South East Europe through reinforced regional agendas. In order to support this, the region will be best served by maintaining a clear and strong focus on the five priority areas with streamlined efforts and effective and efficient use of resources. A strong role of the SEECP as the political umbrella and voice of the region is essential. In this respect, the RCC will continue to work closely to coordinate activities and priorities with individual SEECP Chairmanships-in-Office.

In closing, the importance of regional cooperation cannot be emphasized enough. With economic difficulties putting additional strain on the governments and their capacity to address and contain them, the structures of regional cooperation, including the RCC, will be additionally put to the test. It is, therefore, crucial to reinforce the commitment to regional cooperation and explore the possibilities for common action for South East Europe for several reasons. Firstly, hardly any of the countries concerned can be deemed self-sufficient when it comes to, let us say, securing optimum energy supply for economic and social development or ensuring adequate transport infrastructure. Secondly, acting together and being capable of formulating a joint response to such complex challenges increases the region’s and each individual country’s ability to weather the economic, political or social turmoil ahead. It also increases the region’s maturity and responsibility in view of hardships and demonstrates its ability to find common ground and cooperate with others, a quality which will be extremely important within the common European and Euro-Atlantic family. Last but not least, regional cooperation promotes mutual understanding and good neighborly relations as important elements in regional stability.
## List of task forces and initiatives in SOUTH EAST EUROPE for the period 2008/2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RIs and TFs</th>
<th>Role of the RCC Secretariat</th>
<th>Main Goal of Task Force/Initiative</th>
<th>Highest Political Declaration</th>
<th>Key Partners</th>
<th>Stage of Regionalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEE Health Network</strong></td>
<td>Political support.</td>
<td>Coordinate, implement and evaluate the commitments of the Dubrovnik Pledge and its regional projects for developing public health policy and services.</td>
<td>Dubrovnik Pledge 2001, Skopje Pledge 2005</td>
<td>WHO, CoE, bilateral donors to individual health projects.</td>
<td>A MoU has been signed paving the way for the establishment of a secretariat in the region. The Network currently meets on a regular basis with logistical support of WHO and has benefited from the active participation of all its member countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEE Trade Union Forum</strong></td>
<td>Initiator, mediator, consensus-builder; Political and expert support.</td>
<td>Promote dialogue between trade unions and employer organizations; build consensus between the two; promote inclusion of social partners in government policy making.</td>
<td></td>
<td>ILO, CoE, Switzerland, FES</td>
<td>A regional trade union organization operates under the auspices of the Pan-European Regional Council (PERC) and meets on a regular basis. It receives logistical support from the PERC office in Sarajevo as well as the Croatian Trade Union Association.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEE Employment Network</strong></td>
<td>Political, technical and logistical support.</td>
<td>Promote an integrated approach to reform of employment policies and labor markets institutions in SEE.</td>
<td>Bucharest Ministerial Conference 2003, Sofia Ministerial Conference 2005, Budva Ministerial Conference 2007</td>
<td>ILO, CoE, Switzerland, FES</td>
<td>A regional trade union organization operates under the auspices of the Pan-European Regional Council (PERC) and meets on a regular basis. It receives logistical support from the PERC office in Sarajevo as well as the Croatian Trade Union Association.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electronic SEE + Centre for eGovernance Development</strong></td>
<td><strong>Political and technical support; policy guidance.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Promote the development of Information Society in SEE.</strong></td>
<td><strong>eSEE Agenda 2002</strong>&lt;br/&gt;eSEE Agenda Plus 2007&lt;br/&gt;Joint Ministerial Statement, 2004&lt;br/&gt;MoU on Broadband-SEE, 2005&lt;br/&gt;eSEE Agenda Plus, 2007</td>
<td><strong>UNDP, INA Academy, Slovenia, Italy, USA, Microsoft.</strong></td>
<td><strong>UNDP funded secretariat is based in Sarajevo and organizes regular meetings of the initiative. The Centre of eGovernance Development has been established in Ljubljana and organizes education events which service the region.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CEFTA 2006</strong></td>
<td><strong>Political promotion, support and intervention as necessary.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Promote regional trade through abolition/reduction of tariffs and elimination of NTBs. Promote an environment conducive to FDI, trade in services, and the protection of intellectual property rights.</strong></td>
<td><strong>CEFTA 2006 Agreement</strong>&lt;br/&gt;OECD, Investment Compact Project Team, Austria, Serbia</td>
<td><strong>EC, WTO, EFTA, OECD, Ireland</strong></td>
<td><strong>Secretariat established in Brussels. Operational bodies of CEFTA in place and meeting on a regular basis.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Investment Compact</strong></td>
<td><strong>Political and expert support to OECD which leads the initiative.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Improving SEE investment environment and economic competitiveness through regional cooperation in policy development and promotion. Creation of monitoring system for reform measures.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ministerial Statement on Regional Framework for Investment in SEE, Vienna 2006</strong>&lt;br/&gt;Private sector actors.</td>
<td><strong>Investment Compact Project Team, SEE Investment Committee and its working groups all operational and meeting on a regular basis.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business Advisory Council</strong></td>
<td><strong>Political support.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Engaging regional governments and economic policy makers with the needs of the private sector.</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Justice and Home Affairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Role/Support</th>
<th>Initiative Details</th>
<th>Donors</th>
<th>Initiative Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Migration, Asylum, Refugee Regional Initiative (MARRI)</strong></td>
<td>Initiator (SP) and provider of political support, Facilitator of project implementation and regional coordination</td>
<td>Promoting regional cooperation issues according to the EU standards</td>
<td>Ministers of Foreign Affairs MoU on MARRI Host Agreement for the MARRI Regional Centre</td>
<td>ACTA, Europol, Frontex, ICMPD, IOM, RCC, SDC, UNHCR, USAID, SEPCA, SECI Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regional Anti-corruption Initiative (RAI)</strong></td>
<td>Initiator, provider of political and expert support, Facilitator of project implementation and regional coordination</td>
<td>Promoting governmental anticorruption activities coordination, optimization of efforts and permanent dialogue with the donor community</td>
<td>Ministers of Justice MoU on “cooperation in fighting corruption through the South Eastern European Anti-Corruption Initiative” – 2007 Zagreb Agreement between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the office of the Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe on “SPAI RSLO* headquarters” - 2003</td>
<td>CoE, UNODC, OSCE, RCC, OECD, USAID, SEC Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secretariat of the Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe</strong></td>
<td>Political support and regional coordination for the SEE PCC</td>
<td>Coordination, harmonization and cataloguing of all Convention related activities</td>
<td>Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe – 2006 Vienna, signed and ratified by the member states</td>
<td>Member States, EU, DCAF, Austria, Slovenia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Southeast Europe Police Chiefs Association (SEPCA)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Southeast European Cooperative Initiative Regional Center for Combating Trans-border Crime (SECI Center)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Southeast European Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG)</strong></td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political support, facilitator of project implementation, initiator of the OCTN (SP) and regional coordination</td>
<td>Political support, facilitator of project implementation and regional coordination</td>
<td>Political and expert support, regional coordination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Cooperation on the strategic level of police directors</td>
<td>Regional Cooperation on the operational level between police and customs of the region</td>
<td>Mechanism of judicial cooperation with intention to support operation of the SECI Center</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member states, EU Commission, RCC, SECI Center, Interpol, OSCE, SDC</td>
<td>Member states, EU Commission, Interpol, OSCE, UNODC, WCO, SEPCA, MARRI, RAI, RCC, SEEPAG</td>
<td>Member states, EU Commission, Interpol, OSCE, UNODC, SECI Centre, Europol, Eurojust, EJN, RCC, SEEPAG</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member police services, SDC, donors</td>
<td>Member states</td>
<td>Fully regionally owned organization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Security Cooperation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South Eastern Europe (DPPI SEE)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Create regional capacity to respond to natural and human-made disasters. Bring together donors and IGOs and NGOs to coordinate activities</strong></th>
<th><strong>Declaration on Co-operation in Disaster Preparedness and Prevention in SEE, Bucharest, June 2002, MoU signed by 10 SEE Countries and Slovenia</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEE Member states annual contribution Donor countries.</strong></td>
<td><strong>SEE governments, UNDP, UN, IFRC, NATO, SRSA International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent, Swedish Rescue and Search Agency, Danish Emergency Management Agency, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation</strong></td>
<td><strong>SEE Member states</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DPPI Secretariat is based in Sarajevo, Regional ownership – member countries.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Member states</strong></td>
<td><strong>Member states</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) | Coordination, assistance for fund-raising, and political support. Increased control over small arms and light weapons within the countries in South Eastern Europe.  

RACVIAC was established as the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre with the aim providing arms control training, promoting confidence and security building measures as well as broaden cooperation in South Eastern Europe (SEE). In line with SEECP Defense Ministerial in 2005 declaration it shifted emphasis onto defence conversion. | 1. Stability Pact /UNDP agreement  

2. Ministers of Defense Declaration  


Contributions to RACVIAC budget by the MAG countries Croatia is providing facilities. | Program and organization is regionally owned. Funding from the region should be secured.  

In process of accepting and adopting by SEE Countries a new legal status implementing regional ownership.

Regional Arms Control Verification Initiative (RACVIAC) - Centre for Security Cooperation  

Observer in Multinational Advisory Group (MAG), expert participation in workshops/seminars.
### Building Human Capital and Cross-Cutting Issues

| Task Force: Fostering and Building Human Capital of the RCC | Initiator, political support. Facilitation of its work in accordance with the Joint Declaration on the establishment of the RCC and the RCC Statute. | Promote coherency and coordination between education, higher education, research and science by creating a platform for dialogue and cooperation of actors involved in these sectors. Enhancing cooperation for developing knowledge based societies by promoting the knowledge triangle as a key driver in fields such as the Bologna process and follow-ups, Education and training 2010 and follow-ups, the European Research area. For securing sustainable regional cooperation structures, the TF is implementing a Mobility Program aimed at building respective capacities in partner Ministries in SEE. | MoU of Istanbul (2007) between Ministers responsible for education, science and research (“Coordination process”). Joint Statement of Ministers of Education from South Eastern Europe on Building Human Capital and Promoting Diversity through Dialogue, Creativity and Innovation, Oslo, Norway, 5th June 2008. | RCC Board and Secretariat, Istanbul MoU Signatories, Members of the Steering Platform on Research, Members of the ERI SEE | TF Leadership (RO, AT, HR), contributions of members and donors in kind and in cash. Chairmanship: Romania, Co-Chairmanship: Austria and Croatia. |
| Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) | Initiator, political support, has been designed and founded as a follow-up initiative of the Task Force Education and Youth, SCSP is initiator of Building Human Capital initiative. ERI SEE supports national reforms in education and training through regional capacity building, transfer of know-how and linking these efforts to European frameworks for education development (the EU Work Programme “Education and Training 2010”, the Bologna and the Copenhagen Processes). Promoting cooperation between the education and research sectors in South Eastern Europe (SEE) is priority as well. | Memorandum of Understanding between SEE ministers of education, science and research signed in Cyprus, 2003; Memorandum of Understanding between SEE ministers of education, science and research signed in Istanbul, 2007. | Council of Europe, European Training Foundation, European University Association, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital of the Regional Cooperation Council, Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital of the RCC as of 2008, Austria, The Netherlands, Norway (structural costs exempt from the year 2008), Switzerland. ERI SEE members. | Austria, the Netherlands, Norway (structural costs exempt from the year 2008), Switzerland, Croatia. | ERI SEE set up in 2004. Croatia hosts the ERI SEE Secretariat. In 2006 the ERI SEE Secretariat started to function as the ERI SEE Agency located in Zagreb, Croatia. |
| SEE-ERA.NET and SEE-ERA.NET PLUS | Continue EC support for regionally designed RTD program such as SEE-ERA.NET (PLUS) | Networking projects aimed at integrating EU member states and Southeast European countries in the European Research Area by linking research activities within existing | SEE-ERA.NET White Paper 2007 and Joint Action Plan | Austria, the Netherlands, Norway (structural costs exempt from the year 2008), Switzerland, Croatia. | ERI SEE set up in 2004. Croatia hosts the ERI SEE Secretariat. In 2006 the ERI SEE Secretariat started to function as the ERI SEE Agency located in Zagreb, Croatia. |

### Table:

- **Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE):**
  - Initiator, political support, has been designed and founded as a follow-up initiative of the Task Force Education and Youth, SCSP is initiator of Building Human Capital initiative.
  - ERI SEE supports national reforms in education and training through regional capacity building, transfer of know-how and linking these efforts to European frameworks for education development (the EU Work Programme “Education and Training 2010”, the Bologna and the Copenhagen Processes).
  - Promoting cooperation between the education and research sectors in South Eastern Europe (SEE) is priority as well.

- **SEE-ERA.NET and SEE-ERA.NET PLUS:**
  - Continue EC support for regionally designed RTD program such as SEE-ERA.NET (PLUS).
  - Networking projects aimed at integrating EU member states and Southeast European countries in the European Research Area by linking research activities within existing.

### Actions:

**Memorandum of Understanding**
- Between SEE ministers of education, science and research signed in Cyprus, 2003.

**Council of Europe, European Training Foundation, European University Association, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital of the Regional Cooperation Council, Task Force Fostering and Building Human Capital of the RCC as of 2008.**

**Austria, The Netherlands, Norway (structural costs exempt from the year 2008), Switzerland.**

**ENHANCEMENT OF COOPERATION BETWEEN PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES:**
- Implementation of a Pilot Joint Call within SEE-ERA.NET.
- New call will be implemented in SEE-ERA.NET PLUS (Budget).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South East European Entrepreneurial Learning Centre (SEECEL)</th>
<th>Promoting an entrepreneurial culture is an important objective under the renewed Lisbon Agenda and makes an important contribution to create jobs and growth for Europe. Entrepreneurship is one of the 8 key competences defined in the Recommendations on Key Competences for Life-Long Learning adopted by the Commission in 2005. This project shall create the foundations for a more developed national, bilateral and regional RTD programmes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political and expert support and cooperation, Non voting member of Steering Committee</td>
<td>IPA multi beneficiary fund consultations and coordination committee; European Charter for Small Enterprises for WB; Letter of support from SEE Countries Governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. National agencies in charge of Science: ZSI, Austria PT-DLR, Germany 3. Western Balkans countries and their Ministries in charge of Science: In SEE-ERA. NET PLUS: Turkey Apart from this all participants from SEE-ERA.NET with the exception of Hungary Regional members, European Commission, RCC, OECD.</td>
<td>EU IPA multi beneficiary, Croatian Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>around 3,5 Million Euros) - White Paper - Joint Action Plan</td>
<td>SEECEL operational from 19 January 2009 in Zagreb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
** Gender Task Force (GTF) **

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Mission:</strong> The GTF is committed to advancing sustainable, gender balanced development in SEE, in the context of European integration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- Entrepreneurship culture across the **region** and foster the alignment with on-developments in the EU in the field of entrepreneurial learning

- The overall purpose of this project is to contribute to the implementation of the European Charter for Small Enterprises in the Western Balkans and Small, in particular its components I (entrepreneurship and education) and IV (improved skills for enterprises) which is in line with SBA (2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government, Parliament, Civil society, Political parties, Trade unions, Employer associations, Think tanks, Media, International organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries/ Organizations: Norway, Denmark, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Greece</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional Centre in Zagreb; Participating Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
1. Introductory remarks

1.1. Overview

In the course of implementation of its Strategic Work Programme for 2008-2009, the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) has clearly profiled itself as a key partner of the international community for issues related to the cooperation in South East Europe as well as for general perspectives and development of South East Europe, acting under the political guidance of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP). In this framework, the RCC and its Secretariat have closely cooperated with the SEECP and its Chairmanship-in-Office, combining and joining the efforts to enhance and strengthen regional cooperation in South East Europe.

In this period, the regional cooperation in South East Europe acquired new characteristics, becoming a genuine regionally-owned network of cooperation among the governments of South East Europe. It has been demonstrated that regional cooperation through an enhanced ownership principle and the European agenda are linked. The advancement of RCC members from South East Europe on the path of European and Euro-Atlantic integration has additionally developed potentials and readiness for regional cooperation and its further strengthening. Conversely, by strengthening regional cooperation, South East Europe sends a message on its preparedness for moving forward in its European agenda. This is particularly important in the context of the current political climate within the European Union (EU), of the refocusing of the international agenda and of the effects of the global economic and financial crisis.

The region became increasingly aware that the existing differences in views do not represent an obstacle but have instead acted as an incentive towards the strengthening of cooperation in the development related sectors. At the same time, there is a growing awareness that the remaining differences have to be resolved with added urgency and self-responsibility of the actors from the region. Mutually acceptable solutions to outstanding issues should be reached in a pragmatic manner.

The past year also witnessed the increasing awareness that in the region with a rather complex historical heritage of ethnic, cultural, religious and other character, there is a clearly existing will to strengthen the culture of mutual respect, dialogue, tolerance and reconciliation in order to make progress towards successful cooperation and European and Euro-Atlantic integration.
Building on the results achieved in the first year of the RCC and considering the challenges ahead, all actors involved should continue to work even more energetically, determined to undertake all efforts aimed at further development of regional cooperation in South East Europe.

1.2. Tackling the effects of the global economic crisis

Decisive, comprehensive and accelerated measures are particularly necessary against the backdrop of the current economic and financial crisis in Europe.

All efforts must be put into joint action to address the adverse effects of the current economic and financial crisis to the recently most dynamic emerging markets in Europe. Against the unresolved political issues, the added adverse impact of the global crisis may lead to economic stagnation, or even to the deterioration of the overall social and political situation in the region.

In order to address the adverse effects of current economic and financial crisis, the RCC needs to provide a new impetus for regional cooperation in South East Europe, in particular, in terms of avoidance of economic protectionism regarding the access to the markets in the region. The crisis calls for combined and joined efforts that may provide a new incentive and approach to prevail over remaining political stereotypes, agitations or hesitations towards the regional cooperation.

In this view, efforts at the national levels aimed at countering the adverse effects of global economic and financial crisis in the region should be complemented with the activities and targeted efforts at the regional level, in order to achieve adequate synergetic approach and effects. The RCC shall continue to provide the platform for such action at the regional level, gathering all relevant actors in this context.

1.3. The way ahead

Further advancement of regional cooperation in the priority areas of the RCC activities, including through implementation of concrete projects, will contribute to the overall development of South East Europe and to the region moving closer towards the EU, in line with the established policies and the Thessaloniki agenda and on the basis of individual merits.

The RCC supports all initiatives and activities that render the European perspective more tangible and maintain the region high on the EU agenda. In this context, the RCC welcomes that the European perspective of the Western Balkans has been repeatedly reaffirmed by the EU, most recently at the December 2008 Meeting of the EU Council.

The RCC members from the region, for their part, should remain committed to advance the implementation of their obligations and commitments arising out of the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP), including by resolving the outstanding issues in order to assist each other along the European and Euro-Atlantic path and guarantee lasting peace, stability, reconciliation and cooperation in this part of Europe. The RCC encourages all members to take pragmatic steps towards this direction.

The RCC is involved in the preparation and holding of a conference on the Western Balkans to be organized by the Swedish Presidency of the EU Council and the European Commission in Brussels in December 2009. The conference will address issues related to
the impact of financial crisis on the region, on the progress of the enlargement process as well as on regional cooperation, with a particular emphasis on the fields of energy, transport and development of infrastructure.

The implementation of activities planned for realization in the course of 2009-2010 will demand even stronger networking, interaction and contacts between the RCC and its Secretariat with the governments of the region, the EU institutions, IFIs and other relevant international partners.

South East Europe is at crossroads again. All efforts must be joined to provide further advancement of this part of Europe and avoid stagnation or backsliding.

The RCC stands ready to continue to provide additional impetus and full support to this aim, also by identifying and elaborating result-oriented projects.

2. Political aspects and general framework of RCC activities

2.1. Coordination, streamlining and networking activities

- In line with the provisions of the Joint Declaration on the Establishment of the RCC and the Statute of the RCC, and addressing the priority areas of cooperation, the RCC will, focus on the following activities:
  - Enhancing coordination of regional cooperation activities to the benefit of the overall development of South East Europe.
  - Raising awareness of the importance of regional cooperation for social and economic development of the region.
  - Forging confidence and advancement on the path to the EU and Europe-Atlantic integration through the implementation of the RCC Communication Strategy.
  - Advancement of cooperation with the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), the EU and relevant international organizations and IFIs with the aim to further develop regional projects.
  - Ensuring that all RCC members are able to participate in the RCC activities and meetings as well as in all other pertinent regional initiatives and fora.
  - Providing additional expertise and support to regular meetings and activities of the permanent networking mechanism involving the RCC National Coordinators from South East Europe, the European Commission and relevant IFIs, through the RCC Secretariat. This is aimed at identifying concrete regional projects in priority areas of the RCC activities.
  - Providing active overall support and assistance to the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office in the implementation of their priorities and agenda, including in preparing the SEECP Summit and ministerial meetings.
  - Conclusion of the comprehensive and detailed process of streamlining existing taskforces and initiatives in South East Europe with the aim of advancing coordination, avoiding overlapping and increasing visibility, effectiveness and transparency of regional cooperation activities.
2.2. Cooperation with the EU and other Brussels-based institutions

In line with the general framework of activities, the RCC Secretariat, acting in particular through its Liaison Office in Brussels and the Special Envoy of the RCC Secretary General for Relations with the Presidency of the Council of the EU, will focus on the following activities:

- Further strengthening of cooperation and coordination with the EU and other Brussels-based institutions on strategic aspects of regional cooperation in South East Europe.

- Maintaining intensive contacts with the current Presidency of the Council of the EU as well as incoming Presidencies, the European Commission and the European Parliament, in order to keep regional cooperation in South East Europe in full focus of the EU and its institutions.

- Continuation of the coordination and planning of joint activities with the current Presidency of the Council of the EU as well as incoming Presidencies and the European Commission in supporting and promoting regional cooperation processes in South East Europe and contributing to pinpointing and elaborating projects of paramount regional interest.

- Participation in the preparation and holding of the December 2009 conference on the Western Balkans organized by the Swedish Presidency of the EU Council and the European Commission.

- Continuation of participation of the RCC Secretary General and representatives of the RCC Secretariat in meetings and events related to Western Balkans and South East Europe, organized under the auspices of the EU institutions.

- Continuation of regular contacts and exchanges of views between the officials of the RCC Secretariat and the representatives of the EU institutions, including through regular briefings for the working bodies of the EU Council (e.g. Working Group on Western Balkans – COWEB).

- Consolidating the role of the RCC as a key interlocutor of the EU and its institutions in South East Europe, in particular, in identifying possible initiatives and elaborating projects of strategic importance for the economic and social development of the region.

- Contribution to planning and programming of the Multi-beneficiary IPA Programme, in particular, through identification of multi-beneficiary and regional projects to be possibly financed by the European Commission, as a result of regular contacts and exchanges of views with the RCC members from South East Europe.

- Continuation of regular contacts and cooperation with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and other Brussels-based institutions active in the priority areas of the RCC.
2.3. Cooperation with the International Financial Institutions (IFIs)

In order to enhance cooperation and coordination with the relevant IFIs, within the existing donor cooperation structures, including, in particular, the Western Balkans Investment Framework, presently in the process of being established, the RCC will focus on the following activities:

- Aligning the regional cooperation agenda with plans and programmes of the relevant IFIs.
- Advancement of cooperation and coordination with relevant IFIs through active participation of the RCC in existing donor cooperation and coordination structures, in developing possible large-scale regional projects within the comprehensive approach to tackle adverse effects of the global economic crisis in the region.
- Keeping close working contact and deepening of cooperation with interested IFIs such as the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Council of Europe Development Bank, in particular, through active participation of the RCC in the existing donor cooperation and coordination structures.
- Continuation of the participation of the representatives of the RCC Secretariat in the meetings of the IFI Advisory Group (IFI AG).

3. Priority Areas of Cooperation

3.1. Economic and Social Development

In order to boost economic and social development of South East Europe and tackle the adverse effects of the global economic crisis in the region, the RCC will focus on the following activities:

3.1.1. Business and Investment Climate

- Organizing a ministerial-level Public Private Partnership (PPP) conference securing political commitment to PPP development model and launching regional PPP Network and providing post-launch support to the PPP Network in performing detailed analysis of regional PPP-enabling environment and commencing the harmonization of institutional and legislative requirements for PPP delivery.
- Working with and support to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Investment Compact to improve the investment climate and to encourage private sector development in the region. The RCC will assist in field research and ensure feedback from local authorities and business communities.
- Assisting consultations related to the proposed initiative for the establishment of the South East Europe Investment Bank (SEEIB).

3.1.2. Support to Small and Medium Size Enterprises

- Pursuing the support of IFIs and commercial lenders leading to the establishment of a regional financial instrument aimed at supporting female entrepreneurship.
• Managing South East European female entrepreneurs network under the auspices of the RCC and ensuring donor support for capacity building.

3.1.3. Competitiveness

• Strengthening on-going cooperation with the OECD in the identification and promotion of actions to improve the overall competitiveness of the economies of the region.

3.1.4. Trade

• Providing assistance in the process of resolution of open issues related to the implementation of CEFTA.

3.1.5. Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

• Collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Secretariat of the eSEE Initiative in organizing an eSEE ministerial conference with the purpose of redefining priorities and deadlines of the eSEE Agenda Plus.

3.1.6. Employment

• Assisting and supporting the efforts aimed at reviving the South East European Employment Network.

3.1.7. Social Dialogue

• Organizing and mediating in an initial bipartite meeting between representatives of the region’s employers’ and trade unions’ organizations, with the aim of identifying common concerns in the context of the economic crisis.

•确保参与南东欧洲就业网络的社会伙伴。

3.1.8. Health

• Providing expert and political support to the establishment of the South East European Health Network Secretariat

• Promoting regional public health programs to the donor community.

3.2. Infrastructure and Energy

In order to continue support to the strengthening of regional infrastructure and energy cooperation as a prerequisite for sustainable development of South East Europe, the RCC will focus on the following activities:

3.2.1. Energy

• Continuation of developing synergies with the Energy Community.

• Launching, jointly with the Central European Initiative (CEI), the initiative on sustainable energy development.
• Co-organizing, jointly with the parliaments from the region and in coordination with the Energy Community Secretariat (ECS) a sequence of tailor-made workshops for parliamentary committees responsible for energy issues from South East Europe.

3.2.2. Transport and Infrastructure

• Elaborating, indicating and proposing, together with the South East Europe Transport Observatory (SEETO), based on the input from the RCC members from the region, trans-regional infrastructural projects and acceleration of the realization of the defined infrastructural transport corridors in the region.

• Preparation and organization of a high-level event that would strongly support implementation of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly Resolution on Road Safety by the RCC members from South East Europe.

• Continuation of the assistance in the implementation of the European Common Aviation Area Agreement (ECAA) through the support for the participation of the countries of the region in the South East European Functional Airspace Blocks Approach Initiative (SEE FABA).

• Examining the possibilities for regional cooperation between civil aviation authorities in different areas, such as accident investigation, licensing, safety oversight of airlines etc.

3.2.3. Environment

• Continuing of cooperation with the Regional Environment Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) in combating Climate Change.

• Organizing, jointly with REC, and in the context of the implementation of the framework programme, three thematic high-level events: Natura 2000 in South East Europe, Multilateral cooperation on environmental issues through Multilateral Environmental Agreements in South East Europe and Priority Environmental Infrastructure Investments in South East Europe.

• Support to the implementation of the EU-funded Regional Environmental Network for Accession (RENA) programme, once the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South East Europe (ReReP) project has been completed.

• Organization, in cooperation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE) Water Convention Secretariat, the Global Water Partnership and the International Sava River Basin Commission, the conference on Transboundary Water Resources Management in South East Europe. This will include the following parts: (i) institutional and legal settings for cooperation, (ii) multipurpose use of water resources and (iii) climate change adaptation. The results of the conference shall be presented at the fifth meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention in November 2009.

3.3. Justice and Home Affairs

In the area of justice and home affairs, the RCC is working to find innovative ways to collaborate, deliver practical results and real benefits for the citizens, as well as to ensure that regional cooperation releases the desired outcomes and results. To this end, the RCC will focus on the following activities:
3.3.1. Implementation of the SEECP documents in the area of justice and home affairs

- Elaboration of a multi-annual regional strategy on justice and home affairs, based on the rule of law and the promotion and protection of fundamental rights. This strategy will encompass children’s rights, justice system reform, security and liberty, partnership with civil society and enhanced cooperation with the EU and international organizations, on the basis of a strategic coordination with the EU and consultations with the RCC members from South East Europe.

3.3.2. Ensuring convergence

- Preparation of a consolidated compilation of international legal instruments in force in the area of justice and home affairs, for the RCC members from South East Europe, to be available at the RCC website.

3.3.3. Organized crime

- Facilitating, through the regionally owned and led framework, focused cooperation to improve the effectiveness of the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of the trans-border organized crime, including through providing support to the RCC members from the region to enhance law enforcement capacity to fight organized crime.

- Continuation of cooperation and coordination of projects with the Southeast European Cooperative Regional Initiative Regional Center for Combating Trans-border Crime (SECI Center) on the basis of the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between the RCC Secretariat and the SECI Center.

3.3.4. Courts and Prosecutors’ cooperation

- Promoting more effective, permanent and functional prosecutors’ cooperation, including through ensuring continuity, common solutions and connectivity between the South Eastern Europe Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG) and the Prosecutors’ Network in South-Eastern Europe (PROSECO).

- Providing support, in cooperation with the International Association of Prosecutors (IAP), to the organization of a regional annual Forum of the Prosecutors General from South East Europe, after consultations with the RCC members from the region.

- Contributing to the development and facilitating the implementation of technical cooperation projects and activities, aimed at strengthening the integrity and capacity of justice institutions, particularly, courts, prosecution services and police, in cooperation with the EU, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Council of Europe, OECD and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

3.3.5. Fight against corruption

- Promoting the establishment and implementation of a more coherent and joint approach to address anti-corruption at the regional level through Regional Anti-corruption Initiative (RAI).
• Ensuring the continuation of joint projects of the RCC Secretariat and RAI on Anti-corruption Consultancy and the Survey on Integrity and Resistance to Corruption of the Criminal Judicial System in Countries of South East Europe.

• Organization of the Regional Conference on Justice Systems Integrity.

3.3.6. Migration, asylum and refugees

• Providing political assistance and support to the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Return Initiative (MARRI) as well as facilitating consultations on visa regime issues and providing support in identifying and elaborating projects related to the integrated approach to migration through dialogue, cooperation and partnership with countries of origin and transit.

3.3.7. Police and law enforcement cooperation

• Providing political support to the South East European Police Cooperation Convention (PCC) and its Secretariat as well as in raising visibility of this new regional instrument.

• Facilitation of the continuation of the programs on Organized Crime Training Network (OCTN), the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) I24/7 IT system connecting border control points and the Crime Analysis Project, by the South East European Police Chiefs’ Association (SEPCA), through assistance in fund-raising and providing political support.

• Contributing, together with SEPCA, to the organization of the 2010 Stolen Vehicles Crime Conference.

• Providing political and strategic assistance and support to the EU-funded Project on the Establishment of International Law-Enforcement Coordination Units (ILECU).

3.3.8. Developing partnerships and coordination of regional taskforces and initiatives

• Maintaining strategic partnership with UNODC, in particular regarding the implementation of the Regional Programme 2009-2011 “Promoting the Rule of Law and Human Security in South East Europe”.

• Mobilizing resources for the implementation of regional projects in the justice and home affairs area through the organization of a meeting of potential donors.

• Continuation of coordination of activities of regional taskforces and initiatives in South East Europe in the area of justice and home affairs, on the basis of the established platform.

3.4. Security Cooperation

The efforts of the RCC in preserving effective and valuable activities of regional initiatives and taskforces in the area of security cooperation shall continue while, at the same time, emphasis will be placed on the development of possible cooperation mechanisms that are supported by the RCC members from the region. To this end, the RCC will focus on the following activities:
3.4.1. Disaster Preparedness and Prevention

- Establishment of the South-Eastern and Central Europe Catastrophe Insurance Facility (SECE-CRIF), a joint project of the World Bank, the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN ISDR) and the RCC Secretariat, by signing of the stakeholders agreement.

- Providing active support, jointly with the World Bank and the UN ISDR, to the efforts aimed at the establishment of the South East Europe Firefighting Regional Center (SEEFREC) and ensuring compatibility with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

- Providing support to the further institutional strengthening, as well as, to the substantial activities of the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South Eastern Europe (DPPI SEE).

3.4.2. Non-proliferation of small arms and light weapons

- Initiating a process of transforming the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) into a fully fledged regionally owned initiative.

3.4.3. Defence policy cooperation

- Providing support and active assistance to possible institutionalization of regular meetings in the format of the Defence Policy Directors and International Cooperation Directors of the Ministries of Defence from South East Europe under the auspices of the RCC, following consultations with the RCC members from South East Europe.

- Providing support and assistance to possible establishment of regular meetings of the Heads of Military Intelligence from South East Europe, following consultations with the RCC members from South East Europe.

- Initiating the elaboration of a registry of non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) working in the security cooperation field in South East Europe.

- Elaboration and development of a regional project on Military Base Conversion, in cooperation with the UNDP, following consultations with the RCC members from South East Europe.

3.5. Building Human Capital and Cross Cutting Issues

The area of building human capital remains crucial for the overall development of South East Europe with long-term effects on, virtually, all segments of society. In this view, the RCC will focus on the following activities:

3.5.1. Education

- Preparation of an action plan, based on the input from the RCC members from the region, regarding development of education programs and activities within the education systems in the areas of Quality Assurance, Life Long Learning and Evidence Based Policy Making.
• Providing support in raising awareness in the region regarding the potentials of the Knowledge Based Economy as a tool for accelerated development.

• Providing support in raising awareness in the region regarding the importance and potentials of building a Trust Based Society as a tool for social cohesion necessary to focus social energy on accelerated development.

• Providing support to the activities of the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE), in particular, regarding the enhancement of the network of regional and international key actors and promotion of regional ownership.

• Providing additional assistance and advice regarding legal aspects of the establishment of the South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning (SEE ECL) as a regional initiative with legal personality.

3.5.2. Science and Research

• Providing active assistance and support to the process of development and implementation of the Regional Strategy on Research and Development for the Western Balkans, following conclusions of the Ministerial Conference.

3.5.3. Culture

• Active participation in coordination of the activities and specific projects and programs of regional importance, in particular the Ljubljana Process in the field of cultural heritage.

3.6. Parliamentary Cooperation

Providing active support and assistance to the activities of the Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation in South Eastern Europe through the organization of joint events.
4. Concluding remarks

In line with the Joint Declaration on the Establishment of the RCC, the RCC Statute, this Strategic Work Programme covering the period 2009-2010 and the operational guidelines provided by the Board of the RCC, the RCC, under the political guidance of the SEECP and in close cooperation with the Chairmanship-in-Office of the SEECP, will continue to position itself as a key interlocutor and pivotal framework for strengthening, focusing, coordinating and streamlining regional cooperation activities in South East Europe. Having in mind the inclusive character of regional cooperation in South East Europe and interest of each and any of the individual Members to benefit from the overall development of our region, the implementation of the Strategic Work Programme 2009-2010 will provide a prerequisite for the continuation of development and further profiling of the activities in the RCC framework, as a solid confirmation and proof of the unreserved commitment of all RCC members to the unhindered deepening of such cooperation. The envisaged activities, both in the general sphere and in the concrete priority areas of cooperation, represent an important opportunity to clearly demonstrate forward looking orientation of South East Europe, in the context of the European and Euro-Atlantic integration processes. On that path, targeted regional project cooperation and activities within the priority areas should be further developed to match the needs and goals of the region with agendas and financial programmes of the IFIs. Challenges of the global economic and financial crisis should be seen as an opportunity to forge new partnerships in meeting the goals in priority areas, as well as to pace up and focus regional cooperation activities. Cooperation with the EU and its institutions, in particular with the Presidency of the Council of the EU and the European Commission, will remain of crucial importance. In this context, regional cooperation, operationally led by the RCC, under the SEECP political guidance, adds value to efforts, at the national level, to contribute to stability, security and development of South East Europe.
This report was developed with the financial support of the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) within the Project “Building Institutional Capacity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration” implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Moldova. The opinions expressed are the authors’ opinions and do not necessarily reflect the views of the ADC, UNDP Moldova.
Logo and Slogan of the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova

In the context of the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova and with the aim to give to this Process an well marked and viable image, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova has organized an open national competition for SEECP Chairmanship Logo and Slogan elaboration.

The objective of the Slogan and Logo of the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova was expressed in promoting the image of the South East European region, the cooperation process among the SEECP Participating States, as well as the role of the SEECP as the “united voice” of the region and key actor in the region.

Thus, the SEECP Logo was presented by PhD.eng. Andrei CHICIUC, associate professor, Head of Quality Management Department of the Technical University of Moldova. The SEECP Slogan competition has given us a result that enframes precisely into the nature, goals and principles of the SEECP. The SEECP Slogan is “Future through Cooperation”, elaborated by Mrs. Cristina MAHU, Head of Division, Regional Cooperation Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova.

On the occasion of the Chisinau SEECP Summit, held on 4-5 June 2009, the Republic of Moldova issued a commemorative SEECP coin with the Logo of the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Moldova on one side and the coat of arms of the Republic of Moldova on the other side.
Republic of Moldova - ideal location for your business

Basic facts about Republic of Moldova

The Republic of Moldova is a country, favourably located in south-eastern Europe, which covers the area of 34.000 square kilometres. Being situated at a distance of 300 km from Black Sea, Moldova extends over 350 km from North to the South and 150 km from West to the East. The country has an access to the Black Sea through the Danube River and Giurgiulesti Port, which is the southerly point of the Republic of Moldova. Moldova borders two countries: Ukraine on the East and Romania on the West. Due to Romania’s and Bulgarian’s adherence to European Union in 2007, Republic of Moldova became a close neighbour to EU.

Country’s favourable geopolitical location at the cross-roads of economic and commercial links, which connect European Union with the CIS countries, offers unique possibilities for developing any kind of business activity. Benefiting from developed network of transportation and communication links, Moldova has important opportunities for cooperation with the countries from the region. The free trade agreements and the evasion of double taxation and also agreements regarding the promotion and the investments protection are offering advantages for the market acceleration from the European Union and Community of Independent States.

General information: The Republic of Moldova occupies an area of 33,843.5 km2. The Population of Moldova accounts about 4.2 million inhabitants that represent several ethnic groups. Among them there are about 75.8% Moldovans, 8.4% Ukrainians, 5.9% Russians and other ethnic groups. Due to presence of several

Chisinau is the capital of the Republic of Moldova. Chisinau is located in the central part of the country, with more than 700.000 inhabitants, with a significant administrative, political, economic, scientific, cultural and tourist centre. Situated in a pictorial environment, on seven hills, Chisinau impresses local citizens and its visitors. The capital of the Republic of Moldova is considered to be one of the greenest cities in Europe. There are many parks in the city, as well as special green zones. The city is divided into 5 sectors: Centru that is the oldest part of the city, Riscani, Botanica, Ciocana and Buiucani. For the first time Chisinau city was mentioned in historical documents on 17 July 1436, so it can be considered an old one. There are many places for tourists to see in Chisinau (monuments, museums, parks). Other large cities in the Republic of Moldova are Balti, Cahul and Tiraspol.
Because of close location to the Black Sea, the Republic of Moldova has a temperate continental climate. Summers are warm and winters are mild.

The country’s topography is diverse, ranging from the steppes of the North and South, to forested and mountainous highlands in the centre. This area retains the ancient name Codru, meaning “old forest”. These beautiful forests continue to be of great environmental importance. Underground water reserves, mostly drinking water, are estimated at 200 million cubic metres. The soil is black earth (cernoziom) and is rich in humus. This extremely favourable combination of climatic and soil conditions creates high fields of cereals, grapes, tobacco, fruit and vegetables. Agricultural production continues to be a bulwark of the economy. We are proud with our wine production, as it equally important as are the clothing sector, food processing, and information and communications technology.

Policy: Foreground objectives established by the Government of the Republic of Moldova are directed to the national security insurance, economical development, insurance of the fundamental liberties and citizen’s rights. The progress obtained in the modernization on the democratic institutions according to the European standards and the success registered to the level of a well promoted policy, well based government and democratic institutions consolidation directed to insure a decent live to the population of the country and to attend them with qualitative services, all this proves that the Republic of Moldova is a country oriented to the European Community.

External policy: Beginning with 2003 year the European Integration of the Republic of Moldova became the strategically option of the internal and external politics. The EU-RM political dialogue and cooperation considerably progressed since 2005, when the ENP Action Plan was signed. In October 2008 the EU Council adopted a set of Conclusions on Republic of Moldova that marked a political decision to start soon the negotiations on a new ambitious EU-RM Agreement with the objective to establishing a deep and comprehensive free trade area, as well as reiterating the perspective for a visa free travel for Moldovan citizens.

The Economy: Republic of Moldova is a developing country close to functional market economy, situated at the crossroads of West and Eastern Europe. Nowadays the country’s combination of highly skilled labour force, along with availability of a low-cost manufacturing environment, makes Republic Moldova very attractive for the development and expansion of entrepreneurial activities.

Since 2000 – following a decade of economic decline – the Republic of Moldova has achieved and maintained macroeconomic stability. Fiscal management has been prudent, with a roughly balanced budget in recent years. Inflation has decrease from average 12 % in the past four years to 7.3 % in 2008. Public debt has fallen sharply, from 29.2% of GDP in 2006 to 23.5% in 2007 and 18.5% in 2008, and arrears have been cleared as part of a rescheduling agreement with the Paris Club. The national budget revenues amounted to $ 2.4 billion representing an increase of 14.3% over 2007. Total industrial output amounted to $ 2.8 billion (2008) or a 0.7% increase compared to the previous year's levels.
Capital: Chisinau

Municipalities: Chisinau, Balti, Bender, Comrat, Tiraspol

Area: total: 33 846 square km
      land: 33 009 square km
      water: 837 square km

Administrative divisions: 32 regions, 5 municipalities, 1 autonomous territorial unit and 1 territorial unit.

Autonomous territorial unit: Gagauzia

Climate: Temperate continental (warm summers and mild winter)

Religious: Eastern Orthodox 93,3 %
          Jewish 1,4 %
          Babtist and other 5,3 %

Largest cities:
1 Chisinau 785,218
2 Tiraspol 158,069
3 Balti 148,561
4 Tighina 97,027
5 Cahul 35,481
6 Ungheni 35,157
7 Soroca 28,407
8 Orhei 25,680

Ethnic groups: Moldovan 83,7 %
               Ukrainian 6,6 %
               Russian 1,7 %
               Gagauz 4,5 %
               Romanian 1,4 %
               Bulgarian 1,7 %
               Other 0,4 %

Languages: Moldovan
          Russian
          Gagauz (a turkish dialect)

Natural resources: Lignite, phosphorites, gypsum, arable land, limestone

Territorial unit: Transnistria

Regions: Anenii Noi, Basarabeasca, Briceni, Cahul, Cantemir, Calarasi, Causeni, Cimislia, Criuleni, Donduseni, Drochia, Dubasari, Edinet, Falesti, Floresti, Gideni, Hincesti, Ialoveni, Leova, Nisporenii, Ocnița, Orhei, Rezina, Rîșcani, Singerei, Șoldănești, Soroca, Stefan-Voda, Straseni, Tarâcea, Telenesti, Ungheni

Land use:
agricultural lands: 58 %
forest: 13 %
populated area: 9 %
other: 20 %

Literacy:
total population: 99,1 %
   male: 99,7 %
   female: 98,5 %

Population: 4,127,203