



**SÜDOSTEUROPA-
GESELLSCHAFT**

building
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Croatian
Chairmanship-in-Office
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Stabilitätspakt für Südosteuropa
Gefördert durch Deutschland
Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe
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STABILITY PACT
FOR SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

International Conference

Regional Cooperation Challenges 2007/2008

**From the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe
to the Regional Cooperation Council:**

Enhancing the Voice of the Region

Zagreb, September 8-9, 2006

STATEMENT

**by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria
Mr. Lubomir Kyuchukov**

Dear Mr. Chairman,

Dear participants at the Conference,

I would like to thank the Croatian Government, the Southeast Europe Association and the Stability Pact Secretariat for taking the initiative and organizing this Conference. It is timely and needed.

I will not speak about “we“ and “you“, but about “we“ and “we“, meaning the Stability Pact and the SEECP. This is a matter of consistency and responsibility of the policy of the region. I also believe that the time to speak about the heritage of the SEECP is far ahead in the future. So I will speak about the achievements and perspectives of SEECP.

It seems to me that the key to the elaboration of philosophy of the regional cooperation in South East Europe lies in the correct interpretation of the concept “regional ownership“. If we go back a year and a half ago we will notice that the notion and the process of regional ownership have their roots in an initiative of Dr. Busek in Sofia. The reason of its start was the conclusion that the Stability Pact is a temporary instrument and the purpose of the process of regional ownership was defined as preservation of and elaboration upon the achievements of the Pact. Three objective obstacles for the successful running of this process were identified by the Pact: the insufficient political readiness of the region for its realization; the lack of admin-

istrative and financial resources; the administrative restrictions in the South East Europe countries.

In its turn the region assessed the discussion on the regional ownership as an expression of confidence in it and trust in its capabilities to develop and to deepen the effective and expedient regional cooperation.

Bulgaria considers the discussion on the regional ownership as timely and useful. The Reports of the Senior Review Group, chaired by Ambassador Alpo Rusi were precise and comprehensive. We extremely highly assess the activities of the Stability Pact and of its Special Coordinator Dr. Busek. As Doctor Busek noted half a year ago in Thessaloniki the transformation of the Stability Pact stems from its successful activities.

Time on the Balkans runs quickly. The conclusions which were valid for yesterday today need correction. We are witnesses of a permanently growing maturity of the societies in SEE, mutual confidence building and faith in the capabilities of the region as a whole. During last year a remarkable progress towards European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the countries of SEE was registered, as well as in the realization of the Thessaloniki Agenda of the EU. There is no Balkan State that has not established institutional relations with the EU and that doesn't take part in one way or another in the Euro-Atlantic architecture. The discussion over the regional ownership objectively reflects and follows the process of European integration, democratic reforms and economic development of the region. The concrete meaning of the European perspective is democracy, rule of law, civil society, efficient administration, respect of human and minority rights. These items are the main core of the content of the regional cooperation, the content of regional ownership.

As far as the forms are concerned I would render South East Europe Cooperation Process its due. 10 years already this key initiative of the countries of the region expresses the opinions and the aspirations and formulates the political goals of the countries in SEE. The Process possesses a number of achievements and advantages:

1. The format, including all the countries from the region;
2. The Summits;
3. The working elements of this System — the Troika and the political directors committee.

It is obvious that SEECP is the format which can carry the main burden of the regional cooperation in SEE. It is also necessary for SEECP to obtain the needed know-how and to inherit the valuable assets of the Stability Pact:

1. The engagement of the international community;
2. The access to the system of the current donors of the Stability Pact;
3. The dialogue with the European Commission;
4. The network of viable projects and initiatives;
5. The administrative know-how in more general terms.

In SEE a series of forms of cooperation exist; some of them are already formalized. I am convinced that the model "a network of networks" will prove to be working on condition that the

duplication of efforts is avoided. We should also take into consideration the existing successful models of regional cooperation, such as the Northern Dimension of the EU.

I also consider that the forms of regional cooperation will evolve rather quickly towards the European model, fitting the existent EU standards. Here I include:

1. The harmonization of the structures with the European ones;
2. The enhanced role of the rotating chairmanships of the SEECP;
3. The assumption of the necessary financial burden by the countries of the region for the realization of activities related to the regional cooperation;
4. Establishing a Liaison office in Brussels;
5. Direct, including financial, engagement of the European Commission in the different forms of the regional cooperation.

We owe an answer to our alter ego. I mean we, the SEECP, should elaborate a comprehensive concept, a detailed agenda and an action plan for enhancing regional ownership, including the modalities of our relationship with us again, this time together with our partners within the Stability Pact and the Regional Cooperation Council.

The Kosovo Contact Group Meeting which will take place on 11 and 12th September in Sofia is a part of the efforts of the region to actively participate in the processes here, including regional ownerships in spheres like stability and security.

In conclusion I would like to assure you that Bulgaria as an active participant at the Stability Pact, future Chairman of the SEECP as of spring 2007 and member of the Troika of the SEECP will do everything necessary for the achievement of the abovementioned goals, the paramount one being enhancing the regional cooperation and regional ownership in order to meet the European standards and values as a precondition for the European and EuroAtlantic integration of the region.

Thank you for your attention.