



**JOINT STATEMENT**  
**OF THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
**OF THE SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN COOPERATION PROCESS**

**Zagreb, 2 March 2007**

1. We, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Participating States to the South East European Cooperation Process: Mr Besnik Mustafaj, Mr Sven Alkalaj, Ms Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, Mr Antonio Milošoski, Mr Andrei Stratan, Mr Mihai-Răzvan Ungureanu, Mr Vuk Drašković, Minister of State Mr Beşir Atalay and Deputy Ministers for Foreign Affairs Mr Lyubomir Kyuchukov and Mr Yannis Valinakis, met in Zagreb on 2 March 2007 in order to continue the discussions on the future architecture of the regional cooperation in South Eastern Europe as well as recent developments in the region.
2. We warmly welcomed the participation of Mr Vladimir Radulović, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr Marc Perrin De Brichambaut, Secretary General of the OSCE, Mr Joachim Rucker, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Kosovo, Ms Emily Haber, Special Envoy for Southeast Europe, German EU Presidency, Mr Jan Truszczyński, Deputy Director General for Enlargement in the European Commission and Mr Michael Mozur, Deputy Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact for SEE, who attended the meeting as Special Invitees of the Croatian Chairmanship-in-Office.
3. We assessed with satisfaction a number of positive developments in South Eastern Europe in the course of the last year in terms of consolidating stability, prosperity, good neighbourly relations, regional cooperation and integration into European and Euro-Atlantic institutions. South Eastern Europe is growing into an area of enhanced cooperation, in line with the common European vision. We commended the democratic processes especially reflected in recent elections in the region.
4. We reaffirmed the vital importance of stability, strengthening of democratic institutions and EU and Euro-Atlantic policy in the region as we recognised also that remaining challenges in reaching durable security and stability architecture will call for further strengthening the partnership with the international community.

5. We underlined the importance of the EU enlargement to South Eastern Europe as a key motivation to stability, security, prosperity and further enhancement of regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations. We stressed the importance of finding mutually acceptable solutions on outstanding issues with neighbouring countries. We acknowledged with satisfaction that the area of South Eastern Europe is firmly set on its path to the European Union, with a view to building the EU South East European Dimension.

6. In this respect, we welcomed that two of the SEECP Participating States recently became EU Member States. We commended the accession negotiations of the EU candidates and expressed hope that criteria and requirements will be fulfilled for the accession negotiations with the remaining EU candidate to commence. We welcomed the signing of one Stabilisation and Association Agreement and believe that the overall progress in the reforms and cooperation with international institutions will pave the way for the resumption and conclusion of other Stabilisation and Association Agreements. We also reaffirmed that each country's progress towards the EU continues to depend on their individual merits.

7. We also emphasized the importance of the European Neighbourhood Policy, consolidating an area of prosperity, stability and security, based on human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

8. We welcomed the intention expressed at the NATO Riga Summit to extend invitations at the forthcoming Summit in 2008 to those SEECP countries that meet NATO's performance based standards and are able to contribute to the Euro-Atlantic security and stability. Such a decision would enhance the security dimension and contribution of the SEECP area in the broader Transatlantic security environment. We also welcomed the extensions of the Partnership-for-Peace Programme, as a motivating factor for continuing reforms, while further positive developments were encouraged in the region on the path towards Euro-Atlantic integration.

9. We stressed the importance of preserving and strengthening regional stability. Expressing full support to the process led by the United Nations Secretary General Special Envoy M. Ahtisaari, we evaluated carefully the political developments within the international community after the presentation of his proposal. [We have evaluated in this light developments related to the Kosovo status, having in mind the UNSCR 1244, the Guiding Principles of the Contact Group, the relevant provisions of the SEECP Charter, the comprehensive proposal by the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy Marti Ahtisaari and the ongoing process, recognising that a negotiated solution in a spirit of compromise is an important component for the overall stability architecture in South Eastern Europe. We underlined our highest interest to ensure the cohesion of the international community at this decisive stage, as well as the importance of the endorsement process in the UN Security Council.]<sup>\*</sup> We have also carefully and with full attention perceived the positions expressed and presented by the parties concerned. We strongly emphasized the importance of Kosovo being a democratic, multi-ethnic society based on the rule of law. We continue to advocate the need for measured, balanced and persistent approach as we agreed upon the value of a compromise solution, in the interest of both sides and the region as a whole. We also continue to call for dialogue, responsibility, solidarity and cooperation, reiterating that the EU and

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<sup>\*</sup> One Participating State expressed reservation to the text in brackets.

Euro-Atlantic perspective is the best motivation and framework for the solution. We expressed particular interest that the status related process in all aspects serves to the durable stability, security and cooperation in South Eastern Europe. We assessed the contribution so far of the SEECP to the process and underlined the usefulness of consultations with the Contact Group which reflected the voice of the region (Athens, 5 April 2006 and Sofia, 11 September 2006). We agreed on the necessity of continuing, on a regular basis, those consultations with the Contact Group. We confirmed readiness of the SEECP to continue to play a significant role in this process and to be constructively engaged.

10. We underlined that economic and social development, enhancement of trade and investments, substantial improvement of the regional infrastructure and prosperity of our peoples are our permanent goals, high on the agenda of our governments.

11. We underlined the significance of the new CEFTA 2006, signed on 19 December 2006 in Bucharest, as a major breakthrough in the liberalisation and facilitation of trade in South Eastern Europe and stressed the importance of its early ratification and entry into force. The CEFTA 2006 is highly important for the trade in our area but also for the overall development and opening of our economies to the competitive challenges of broader European and world markets.

12. We reiterated our commitment to strengthening the leadership role of the SEECP in the future of regional cooperation in South Eastern Europe. In recognition of the successful work of the Stability Pact and building on its legacy, in order to assist the SEECP in implementing political guidelines for future regional cooperation activities, a Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) will be established. This step will ensure continued strong and effective coordination of regional cooperation through the common efforts of the SEECP, the EC and the international community. Close cooperation in defining the new institutional set-up among the major stakeholders is of vital importance.

13. We upheld the achievements of the Institutional Working Group, which, under the joint coordination of the Croatian SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office and the Stability Pact, prepared the basic elements concerning the terms of reference and structure of the RCC, appointment procedure and mandate of the RCC Secretary General as well as designation procedure for the Seat of the RCC Secretariat.

14. We underlined the importance of the principles and objectives enshrined in the Charter on Good Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in South Eastern Europe, which significantly contributed to the promotion of stability and security in our region. Also, we agreed on the necessary amendment of the Charter to take account of the creation of the RCC. In this regard, we commended the work of the Committee of the Political Directors and request it to finish its work with the aim to have final decisions and endorsement by Ministerial Meeting and the Summit on May 10 - 11, 2007.

15. We reconfirmed that at our next meeting, we will take the final decisions on the appointment of the first Secretary General and the designation of the Seat of the RCC Secretariat taking into account the endorsement by the Stability Pact Regional Table. These decisions would then be approved by the Heads of State and Government of the SEECP Participating States at their meeting on 11 May 2007 in Zagreb. To this effect, we decided to open the procedure for the designation of the Seat of the RCC Secretariat and the appointment

of the first Secretary General of the RCC and called upon all Participating States to submit to the Chair-in-Office their respective candidatures. To that end we adopted *the Decision on the Procedure for the Appointment of the first Secretary General of the RCC* and *the Decision on the Procedure for the Designation of the Seat of the Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat*.

16. We took note of the scheduled activities which the Croatian Chairmanship-in-Office is going to organise prior to the May Summit, namely: Regional Energy Conference on 2 - 3 April, Meeting of Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs on 12 - 13 April, and Meeting of the Speakers of the Parliaments on 15 - 16 April.

17. We welcomed the request of the Republic of Montenegro to join the SEECP and expressed satisfaction that it will become the eleventh SEECP Participating State following the approval of the Heads of State and Government at the May Summit in Zagreb.

18. We took note of the proposal of the Republic of Moldova to take over the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office from the Republic of Bulgaria in 2008.

19. We thanked the Croatian SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office for the excellent organisation of this Meeting.