



10th Meeting of the Heads of State and Government
of the South-East European Co-operation Process (SEECP)

Zagreb, 11 May 2007

*Report
on the activities of the Croatian Chairmanship-in-Office
of the South-East European Co-operation Process (SEECP)
May 2006/May 2007*

1. Introduction

The Report of the Croatian SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office was submitted to the 10th Meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the South-East European Co-operation Process (SEECP) that took place in Zagreb on 11 May 2007 in Zagreb and was preceded by the Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs on 10 May and the Meeting of the Committee of the Political Directors on 8-9 May.

This Report summarizes the most important activities undertaken within the SEECP framework including international events which representatives of the Croatian SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office attended representing the SEECP.

2. General Remarks

The Republic of Croatia took over the Chairmanship-in-Office of the South-East European Co-operation Process (SEECP) at the Thessaloniki Summit of the SEECP on 4 May 2006.

The activities of the Croatian Chairmanship-in-Office were focused on strengthening of the regional ownership, promoting the European dimension of the region and enhancing the operational capabilities of regional co-operation as well as intensifying co-operation among parliaments and in the fields of energy, home and justice affairs.

In view of the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the countries of the region, the Croatian SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office gave special attention to intensive co-operation with the EU and participation of the EU representatives in all SEECP meetings and activities.

During the Croatian SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office the Republic of Moldova signed the Charter on Good Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Co-operation in South Eastern Europe on 10 October 2007. The Republic of Montenegro expressed its intention to join the SEECP and was actively involved in the SEECP activities.

3. Exit strategy of the SP and strengthening of the SEECP

The Croatian SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office along with the Stability Pact, the EC and the international community co-ordinated activities in the process of exit strategy of the Stability Pact setting foundations for the new regional co-operation architecture that includes – strengthened SEECP, establishment of the Regional Co-operation Council and regionally based Secretariat with the aim of preserving the legacy of the Stability Pact and keeping strong links with the EU.

Financing of the RCC Secretariat was agreed by the countries of the Region, the EC and the donors. The countries of the region agreed to contribute 1 million euros to the budget of the Secretariat. The EC will contribute 1 million euros and the donor countries decided to contribute the same amount as well.

The Institutional Working Group (IWG) co-chaired by the Croatian SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office and the Stability Pact brought concrete solutions for the future architecture of regional co-operation in South Eastern Europe enshrined in the text of the RCC Statute.

4. Meetings and activities

- 10th Meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the SEECP on 11 May 2007 in Zagreb
- The foreign ministers held three meetings (Informal Meeting, Rijeka 8-9 December 2006; Zagreb 1-2 March 2007 and Zagreb 9-10 May 2007);
- Political directors held seven meetings (Opatija 5-6 October 2006; Bucharest, 15 November 2006; Zagreb, 13 -14 February 2007; Zagreb, 28 February -1 March 2007; Zagreb, 27-28 March 2007; Zagreb 24-25 April 2007; Zagreb, 8-9 May 2007)
- The SEECP Troika at the level of political directors held three meetings (Dubrovnik 8 July 2006; Zagreb 8 September 2006 and Zagreb 22 January 2007)
- IWG held five meetings (Bruxelles 24 January 2007; Zagreb 14-15 February 2007; Bruxelles 26 February 2007; Bruxelles 21 March 2007 and Zagreb 24 April 2007)
- Meeting of the Informal Consultative Committee (SEECP Troika political directors with representatives of the Stability Pact and the European Commission), Bruxelles, 3 October 2006

- Conference: Regional Cooperation Challenges 2007 - 2008 - From the Stability Pact to the Regional Co-operation Council: enhancing the voice of the region, Zagreb, 8 -9 September 2006
- Third Informal Meeting of the Ministers of European Affairs of South Eastern Europe, Dubrovnik, 8 July 2006
- The Croatian SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office represented the Process at the Regional Table in Bucharest, 15-16 November 2006, and co-organised the Regional Table in Zagreb 9-10 May 2007. The Process was represented by the SEECP CiO at the Central European Initiative Summit that took place in Tirana in November 2006,
- The Croatian SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office co-ordinated the activities of the Participating States in achieving the single voice of the region in the UN reform through organisation of several co-ordination meetings

5. ***Informal meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the SEECP, Rijeka, 8-9 December 2006.*** The meeting was attended by foreign ministers or their representatives of the SEECP Participating States. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Montenegro, Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact for SE, Head of the UNMIK, and Head of the EC Delegation in Croatia also attended the meeting as special invitees of the Croatian Chairmanship-in-Office.

Participants appraised the ***GUIDELINES-Process of transformation of the regional cooperation structures in the SEECP Area***, prepared by the Croatian SEECP CiO as a valuable contribution to discussion on the future of regional cooperation in South Eastern Europe.

In order to increase the pace of preparing all necessary documents and decisions for the forthcoming meetings, the SEECP foreign ministers assigned the following tasks to the Political Directors:

- the SEECP CiO together with SP to outline the future structure and composition of the RCC Secretariat;
 - the SEECP Political Directors Troika to prepare a proposal on amendments to the SEECP Charter;
 - the SEECP Political Directors Troika and the Secretariat of the Stability Pact to prepare a proposal on election procedures for a Secretary General of the RCC;
 - the SEECP Political Directors Troika, together with the Secretariat of the Stability Pact and with the participation of the EC and representatives of donor countries, to prepare a proposal for a Basic Document of the RCC and its Rules of Procedure.
6. ***Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Zagreb, 1-2 March 2007.*** The meeting saw foreign ministers of the SEECP Participating States or their deputies, as well as the representatives of Montenegro, European Commission, German EU presidency, Stability Pact for South East Europe, OSCE and UNMIK/Kosovo in the capacity of special guests.

The ministers adopted the **Zagreb Joint Statement** and the **Decision on the procedure for designation of the Seat of the RCC Secretariat** and the **Decision on**

the procedure for the appointment of the first Secretary General of the RCC. They also requested the Committee of Political Directors to continue working on the amendments to the SEECP founding document – the Charter of Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Co-operation in the South East Europe, to reflect the new circumstances of a strengthened regional co-operation and its new structures.

7. ***The 6th Conference of the SEECP Speakers of Parliament entitled „The New South Eastern Europe: Role of the Parliaments“*** was held on 16 April 2007 in Zagreb.

The Conference underlined the important role and responsibility of the National Parliaments in the process of enhancing regional co-operation, especially in the context of the region taking greater responsibility and ownership following the phasing out of the Stability Pact and establishing the RCC, giving the pivotal political role to the SEECP.

Results:

- The conference established a Troika Format of the Speakers of Parliament to explore the possibilities of closer cooperation with the Conference of the Speakers of the European Union Parliaments.
- The National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria is going to host the Focal Point for parliamentary co-operation in SEE. The Speakers expressed full support to its future activities

8. ***Forum on Energy Security, Potentials and Investment entitled “Southeast Europe - an Energy Bridge between Russia, Mediterranean, Caspian and Middle-East Regions and the European Union”, 3 April 2007, Zagreb.***

Attended by more than 200 participants the Forum brought together the ministers for energy of the SEECP Participating States as well as the leaders of the countries and the energy industry from across Europe, Asia, and elsewhere who assessed and debated on the vital issues that concern both SEE and the EU in the energy field.

The agenda of the Conference included economic, financial and technical issues of the trans-border deliveries of energy bearers and the related infrastructure; national and regional competition in the energy sector; foreign investments; energy market regulations of the EU; alternatives of the gas-energy transfer from the Black Sea region, the Middle East and South Eastern Europe to the EU.

The opening addresses were delivered by Dr. Ivo Sanader, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, and Mr Andris Piebalgs, member of the European Commission in charge of energy.

On the margins of the conference Croatia, Italy, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia signed the Ministerial Declaration on the Pan European Oil Pipeline and the Ministerial Declaration on the Development of the Hydrocarbons Dimension of the Energy Community.

9. ***Meeting of Ministers of Justice and Ministers of the Interior of the SEECP entitled „Standards of the European Union and the Rule of Law in Southeastern Europe”, Zagreb, 12-13 April 2007.***

The Meeting paid particular attention to the process of implementation of EU standards in the JHA area in SEE, through strengthening of the rule of law, judiciary reform processes and fight against corruption. The opening speeches were delivered by Prime Minister Dr Ivo Sanader, Romanian Prime Mr Minister Călin Popescu – Tăriceanu, Vice – President of the European Commission Franco Mr Frattini and SPSC Dr. Erhard Busek.

Results:

- With the help and support of Vice President Frattini, a conference on EU Justice and Home Affairs Strategy for South Eastern Europe will be organised in order to define long term goals and policies and to address other related issues.
- The ministers shall recommend to their governments to create special educational programmes aimed at increasing the awareness of younger generations of the importance of the rule of law and EU standards in the JHA area.
- The importance of conclusion and proper implementation of readmission agreements, both with the EU and between the SEECP countries as well as the harmonisation of the visa regimes with EU standards was stressed and the EU called upon to accelerate the ongoing discussions on visa liberalisation for SEE.
- The ministers agreed that the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office would brief the EU JHA Council on the conclusions of this Meeting.

On the margins of the meeting, visa facilitation and readmission agreements were initialled between the European Community, the Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Montenegro.

Also on the margins of the meeting a Memorandum of Understanding concerning cooperation in fighting corruption through the SPAI Initiative was signed and Croatia is the depositary country of this document.

10. Overall achievements of the Croatian SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office

- Strengthening of political dialogue thus contributing to stability and security in South Eastern Europe as well as rapprochement of the countries of the region to EU and Euro-Atlantic structures;
- Enhancement of the SEECP through amending the Charter on Good Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Co-operation in South Eastern Europe;
- Designation of the Seat of the Regional Co-operation Council Secretariat and appointment of the Secretary General of the RCC thus contributing to setting up the regional co-operation structure;
- Successful co-operation with the European Commission, the Stability Pact and the donors in the establishment of the new regional co-operation architecture especially its operational capabilities;
- Intensifying of regional co-operation in the fields of energy, home and justice affairs and parliamentary co-operation.