



**H.E. DR. IVO SANADER  
PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

**SPEECH  
AT THE 10th MEETING OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT  
OF THE SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN COOPERATION PROCESS**

**Zagreb, 11 May 2007**

Dear Colleagues and Friends,  
Esteemed Guests,

I said in my opening remarks that Europe and the world came to Croatia today so that from Croatia we could send a message: it is time that our part of the continent, in an appropriate manner, also takes its place on the map of a new united Europe.

Our part of Europe is at a decisive crossroads.

The time in which we are living is extending us a unique opportunity to leave behind an era of instability, mistrust and misunderstanding – to find solutions to the remaining open issues as soon as possible, to move closer to the European Union and the Euro-Atlantic community with even greater conviction, and to finally and completely complete the democratic transformation and stability of Europe.

Now is a historic opportunity.

The South East European Cooperation Process, which is now growing into an authentic and powerful voice for our countries, and which will, through the assistance of the new Regional Cooperation Council, insure the development of

solidarity and advancement in the modernization of this part of the continent, will have an important role in accomplishing these goals.

The European Union and NATO, following their already often stated positions and declared goals, will continue insuring a European and Euro-Atlantic perspective to each of our countries that have chosen to belong to the free and democratic world community.

Through reciprocity and cooperation of all participants of SEECP, who have various degrees of relations with the EU and NATO, I see an additional mechanism of encouragement – it is precisely the countries of South East Europe that have the most interest in everyone equally achieving the goals that we all share.

Before the highest representatives of European institutions, before representatives of leading countries of the world, and before the widest international public, I would like to clearly state: now is the moment for us to take additional efforts for the modernization and Europeanization of South East Europe.

History will not wait.

Europe and the world are changing, harmonizing and advancing. Every delay and postponement outside of this all encompassing wave of advancement leads to a future where we will be left behind. The political elite must recognize that the nations and citizens of South East Europe made their decision, and that the same decision was made from the Adriatic Sea to the Black Sea and from Chişinău to Tirana. It is a decision of freedom and democracy, a decision for Europe and a decision for life in the Euro-Atlantic family – with the standards and values of that family.

Today the citizens of this part of Europe want acceleration. They recognize that after two decades of life in crisis and transition, now is the moment to leap forward to new heights.

That is why here, today, we need a brave vision for tomorrow's South East Europe. This will be the best path for all of us.

I have said all of this because a similar brave vision inspired and prompted wise statesmen to move down a similar path to build a new united Europe 50 years ago.

Just as German Chancellor Angel Merkel said in Berlin during the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, not even two months ago, “For centuries Europe was an idea, nothing more than hope for peace and understanding. However, today we citizens of Europe know – this hope was accomplished. It was because the founders of Europe thought in the long-term; they thought beyond the timeframe of their generation, they thought about the future – for the generations yet to come.”

I have also said all of this because the almost 10 year inheritance of the Stability Pact for South East Europe has left us with an incentive to continue forward.

In this convergence of important anniversaries resides an additional motive for the future picture of Europe’s South East – a picture of a political and human landscape that will be a part of the wider new European space – a picture that will no longer echo the “Balkan powder keg”. The countries and nations of Central and South East Europe are now breaking away from their inherited problems and behaviors, which defined the past – which was often attached to a bad Balkan tone. I see, therefore, a picture of tomorrow’s modern, orderly and developed South East Europe – in a Europe that will also complete its own orderliness and strengthen the foundations of its historic structure.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The goal of which I speak is a historic mission for our generation.

This goal is obtainable. I know this because we in Croatia have moved our country in that direction. We recognized that we cannot live in the past, but rather, while not forgetting the past, we can learn from it and create a future.

That is why we guarantee civil dialogue, stable democracy, rule of law and free market economy – a society of tolerance and respect for human and minority rights.

I have said all of this because in Croatia we have shown that this is possible, and that this pays off.

Today we are negotiating full membership in the European Union and we expect membership by the end of the decade. Today we are also standing at the doorsteps of NATO, expecting that our efforts and reforms will be recognized and confirmed by an invitation for membership already in April of next year.

In a very short period of time, therefore, Croatia will be a full member of the strongest and richest democratic institutions and security systems in the world.

I have said all of this because the example of Croatia has shown that it is possible to answer the challenges of new historic chapters.

I have said all of this because all of those who are standing before challenges, and who are perhaps still indecisive, this will remind them that advancement is possible and that it pays off. All that is necessary is to decisively cross over the threshold.

Croatia crossed this threshold.

This is why cooperation in South East Europe is part of our political program and the motor for our faster accession to the European Union and NATO.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This historic moment demands quick action. Europe, her institutions and her citizens are today immersed in a debate on their future. I am convinced that the over 50 years of peace and the ever increasing prosperity which Europe enjoys, thanks to political integration and the politics of steady expansion, will be the best direction pointer and solution to this debate.

However, precisely because of this, South East Europe cannot wait; it must join the rest of the continent. It cannot be allowed to remain a grey zone with unclear goals and an uncertain future.

Over the last few years, we have recognized the need of the moment and the voice of our nations.

This is also reflected in the strengthening of the SEECP, in our diversity on the same path and in our readiness for solidarity. In this Process of cooperation, old and new members of the EU are participating. In this Process of cooperation, old and new members of NATO are participating. Amongst us are new candidates and countries in negotiations. Amongst us are countries with various degrees of achievement in our relations with the EU and NATO.

I see this diversity as an impetus for cooperation on our same path, on which everyone will pace themselves and will be responsible for their speed.

All of this is an example of advancement in South East Europe.

As sign of advancement is also the new CEFTA. That is why, together with SEECP as the political pillar and base for new relations in this part of Europe,

through CEFTA we have erected a pillar of economic cooperation and development in preparation for the EU.

And the enlargement of the Process is a sign of its importance. With great pleasure, I would like to express my full support for the Republic of Montenegro to become a full participant in this Process.

A sign of advancement is also in the number of democratic elections in our countries, which confirms our new maturity.

A sign of achievement is also in our readiness to openly discuss issues which remain in front us.

And before us, above all else, is a need to establish a lasting architecture of security and stability in this part of Europe which can be achieved only through proportionate solutions to remaining issues.

Speaking about these, I will be frank and open.

Europe needs a stable and democratic Serbia, oriented towards European values and membership in the European Union and NATO. Europe needs a Serbia as a partner for lasting stability in this part of Europe, a Serbia which will move beyond its internal fractures, reaching a breakthrough, and which will recognize the fact that a democratic Serbia, oriented towards new policies, can best protect the interests of its own people. Europe needs a future oriented Serbia.

Europe needs a stable, democratic and responsible Kosovo. A Kosovo that will implement the rule of law, and where all minority communities fully and securely participate in political life. A Kosovo which will bring about stability and cooperation in our part of Europe. Solving the status of Kosovo, as a unique and currently urgent issue, should strengthen security for everyone in this part of Europe. The recommended plan of Special Envoy Ahtisarij offers a framework for such a solution, as it is, for the most part, recognized and accepted by most in the international community. However, I cannot help but emphasize that we need a cohesive and unified international community.

Europe needs lasting stability and an orderly Bosnia and Herzegovina, which will lean on itself and which will administer itself with full equality of its three nations. We need a Bosnia and Herzegovina which will – on the seeds of Dayton, which stopped the war based on principles of democratic representation and national pluralism – find the right degree and balance in everyone's interest, without any suppression and without limits that would renew old fears or unsettling situations. We need a Bosnia and Herzegovina with a lasting constitutional solution, oriented towards the European Union and NATO.

We are aware of the challenges which still remain ahead of us in this part of Europe. However, patience, a balanced attitude and solidarity – together with clear positions that Europe and Euro-Atlantic integrations are the best encouragement, the best framework and the best resources for solving these issues – will be of great importance for all of us.

We are also aware that the European South East needs accelerated economic advancement. Not even in this view can we allow this part of the continent to remain outside the economic strategy of the Union, since remaining behind always feeds instability. The region's geographic position, infrastructure, energy, natural resources – on these advantages and potentials it is possible and necessary to give new impetus for developing Europe's South East. Economic and social modernization of this region must therefore be a priority for our Process and the new Regional Cooperation Council, with constant and close ties with Brussels, so that we can build-in our economic potentials within wider European development politics.

I mentioned prosperity.

For among other reasons because the region of South East Europe is a region of great historic, human and cultural wealth.

Let that also be a leading impetus and notion in times to come and in changes which must be completed.

In conclusion, I call on everyone to recognize the importance of this historic moment, and that together – in South East Europe and in the European Union – we must strengthen and quicken everything that will lead to our ultimate meeting in togetherness.

Thank you.