

**SUMMIT DECLARATION
OF THE HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF COUNTRIES
OF SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN COOPERATION PROCESS**

Tirana, March 28th 2002

We, the Heads of State and Government of the countries of South East European Co-operation Process, Mr. Rexhep Meidani, Mr. Beriz Belkic, Mr. Ion Iliescu, Mr. Georgi Parvanov, Mr. Boris Trajkovski, Mr. Dragisa Pesic, Mr. Costas Simitis met in Tirana on March 28, 2002, at the Fifth Summit of the SEECP. Participated also as observer Mr. Stjepan Mesic. Present at the meeting were the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of these countries, Mrs. Arta Dade, Mr. Slobodan Casule, Mr. Ismail Cem, Mr. Mircea Geoana, Mr. George A. Papandreou, Mr. Goran Svilanovic and Deputy Ministers Mr. Milovan Blagojevic, Mr. Ivan Petkov and as observer, Mrs. Vesna Cvjetkovic-Kurelec. Also participating as special guests were the Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe Mr. Erhard Busek and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Kosovo Mr. Michael Steiner.

We have reaffirmed our strong commitment to further advance the co-operation process of the participating countries through confidence-building measures that will play a greater role in building a regional security to the benefit of peace, stability and sustainable development in the region. We have emphasised, within the framework of the SEECP, the indispensable priority for each country to fulfil the high objectives of democracy, economic development, stability and greater security. The co-ordination of broader co-operation with relevant international organisations and fora also constitutes an important factor for the attainment of these objectives and of our international commitments.

We have reaffirmed our countries' commitments contained in the Charter on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Co-operation in South Eastern Europe based on the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act, as well as the commitments contained in the Summit and Ministerial Declarations. We have also emphasised the role of the SEECP as an important instrument for regional co-operation and for the strengthening of peace and stability in the region.

We have stressed our commitment for the speedy implementation of the Action Plan for Regional Economic Co-operation, outlining priority areas where immediate progress is possible.

We have welcomed the important commitments and all efforts and progress made by participating countries to overcome the difficult situations and crises experienced in the region during the last year.

We have expressed our conviction that durable settlement of any crisis can be achieved only through dialogue, a climate of confidence and overall co-operation.

We have reconfirmed our commitment to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of our countries' borders and reiterated our common position for the peaceful settlement of disputes, vigorously rejecting the use of force and for the fulfilment in good faith of obligations under international law.

We encourage efforts to continue to deepen the processes of democratic reforms, respect for the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, as a fundamental prerequisite to the overall development of South East Europe and for the prevention of conflicts.

We have expressed our concern for the plight of refugees and displaced persons in the region. We reiterated our commitment that all the necessary steps for their return home in compliance with the relevant international Agreements and UNSC Resolutions should be taken.

We have strongly condemned acts of vandalism against cultural monuments and religious sites in the region and reaffirm our commitment to jointly work for their preservation and restoration. The richness of the region's cultural heritage lies also in its diversity.

We have condemned all forms of terrorism, which jeopardise the stability and security of states and the lives of their citizens. Supporting without reserve the fight against terrorism and organised crime, we have expressed our countries' commitment to increase our efforts leading to more efficient and fruitful co-operation in combating terrorist activities at national, regional and international level and in preventing support and shelter for terrorist organisations and elements.

We are convinced that the overall economic growth and prosperity in the SEECP region is impossible without speedy action for rehabilitation, construction and interconnection of the regional infrastructure. A developed transport, energy, telecommunication and water infrastructure is essential to the free movement of persons and trade, as well as to the enhancement of social cohesion and integration.

We have welcomed the two important meetings of the Ministers Responsible for Energy and of the Ministers of Interior/ Public Order of the South East European Co-operation Process, which discussed two crucial issues for the entire region:

the establishment of a regional energy capacity and the fight against terrorism and all forms of organised crime and illegal trafficking.

Encouraged by the concrete results already achieved, we support the determined objectives for a continuation of these important dialogues.

We have commended the results of the Third Conference of Presidents of Parliaments held in Tirana on March 5th, 2002 and expressed our conviction that the deepening of the co-operation process must be constantly based on a sound democratic framework and the rule of law. We have supported the stated goals of the Conference of Presidents of the Parliaments for holding regular and frequent conferences and meetings at different levels, as well as the suggestions to consider the possibility for the establishment of a Parliamentary Assembly, within the framework of the SEECP.

We have welcomed the co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and encouraged the countries concerned to continue this co-operation to bring all persons indicted for war crimes to justice.

We have welcomed the signing of the Agreement between the Federal, Serbian and Montenegrin leaders on the principles for a single constitutional arrangement for Serbia and Montenegro.

We believe that this Agreement would consolidate a state union and it would be an important contribution towards the stabilisation of the region. In that regard we commend the valuable contribution by the High Representative of EU Mr. Solana.

Underlining the necessity for full and consistent implementation of the UNSCR 1244 (1999), on Kosovo, FRY, we have welcomed the elections held in 2001 and the inauguration of the Kosovo Assembly and other institutions of self-governance.

We have encouraged the provisional institutions to start to function and appeal to all ethnic communities to participate actively in the self-governance process for the establishment of a democratic multi-ethnic society with the crucial assistance of UNMIK, KFOR, OSCE and other international institutions.

We have underlined the need for assuring the safe and unimpeded returns of internally displaced persons.

We have welcomed the efforts of the main political forces under the leadership of the President Trajkovski widely supported by all citizens which brought about the adoption of the constitutional reforms and legislation changes following the Framework Agreement.

The activities of the government for the stabilisation of the situation were also appraised.

We have expressed our appreciation for the valuable contribution of the international community, in particular the EU, NATO and OSCE, to that end. We believe that all citizens of the country, irrespective of their ethnic origin, will benefit from the positive results in the future, consolidating a multiethnic society.

In this context, we have reconfirmed our full support and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of the borders, condemning the use of armed violence as a means to achieve political goals.

We have highly appreciated the contribution of the international community, in particular through UN, NATO, EU, OSCE to security, stability, peace, democracy and respect for human rights in our region. We consider the presence of NATO, EU and of the international forces, as mandated by the respective UNSC resolutions and special arrangements as substantial contributions to regional security.

We have greeted the efforts and progress made by the countries of the region in the processes of the European and Euro-Atlantic integration. We have reiterated our commitment for the further deepening of the regional co-operation as a very important element enhancing these processes.

In our efforts to increase security in the region, we have attached special attention to the efforts of those SEECP countries that aim to join NATO structures. Supporting the objectives of the aspiring countries to accelerate the process, we have committed ourselves to further develop our co-operation leading up to the Prague Summit. We express our strong expectation that at the Prague Summit NATO will decide the Alliance's enlargement to South Eastern Europe.

We consider that the overall development of the states and societies of our region is closely linked to their efforts to integrate into the EU. We have strongly supported the acceleration of the accession and Stabilisation and Association Processes, which will lead all the countries of the region to full membership in the EU, in due time, in accordance with the pertinent criteria.

We recall the importance of regional co-operation in EU policies in South East Europe and believe that the SEECP can provide a substantial framework in this context.

We have taken note that some SEECP participating countries involved in Stabilisation and Association Process, welcoming the inauguration for the Convention for the future of Europe expressed their interest to be associated to the extent possible in the work of this forum.

We have reaffirmed our support for the Stability Pact. We consider that the enhancement of the SEECP will benefit from the continued development of the Stability Pact. We view the resulting synergy as an important contribution to further regional co-operation and economic, political and social developments of our countries.

In this regard, we welcome the willingness of the Stability Pact to develop closer links with the SEECP as the co-ordinated voice of the region. We therefore request the upcoming Chairman in Office to explore the modalities of such a co-operation and to represent the Process in the Informal Consultative Committee.

Aware of the need to enhance the SEECP's effectiveness as a regional co-operation process, we note with appreciation the contribution of the outgoing Chair in Office, Albania, under the draft "Program for the Further Development of the SEECP".

We tasked our Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Committee of Political Directors to review, under the leadership of the new Chair in Office, the activities so far conducted and the ways for increasing the effectiveness of the existing organisational arrangements, if necessary with concrete proposals for their improvement.

The Committee of Political Directors will possibly present a progress report before the next Ministerial Meeting.

We have expressed our high appreciation for the role and activities carried out by our Ministers of Foreign Affairs for addressing the complex challenges facing our region over this period and for the contacts maintained with various international organisations.

Furthermore, we also commend the valuable work of the Committee of the Political Directors in the development of this Process and we are looking forward to the further enhancement of its role.

We welcome the initiative of the incoming Chair in Office to activate, as needed, the SEECP Troika mechanism.

We have expressed our warm thanks for the hospitality of President Rexhep Meidani in hosting the Fifth Meeting of the South East Europe Co-operation Process in Tirana. This Summit also attests to the positive role that the Albanian authorities are playing towards the realisation of our common goal in the region.

We have decided that the next meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the SEECP countries will be held in Belgrade in 2003.