

**Meeting of the Heads of State and Government of
the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP)**

SARAJEVO DECLARATION

Sarajevo, 21 April 2004

1. We, the Heads of State or Government of the countries of South-East European Cooperation Process, Mr. **Fatos Nano**; Mr. **Sulejman Tihic**; Mr. **Georgi Parvanov**; Mr. **Kostas Karamanlis**; Mr. **Ljupco Jordanovski**; Mr. **Ion Iliescu**; Mr. **Svetozar Marovic**; Mr. **Recep Tayyip Erdogan**, have met in Sarajevo on 21 April 2004, at the Seventh Summit of the SEECP. Mr. **Ivo Sanader** has participated also as observer.

Present at the meeting were following Ministers of Foreign Affairs: Mr. **Kastriot Islami**; Mr. **Mladen Ivanic**; Mr. **Petros Molyviatis**; Mr. **Mircea Geoana**; Mr. **Vuk Draskovic**; Mr. **Abdullah Gul**, and Deputy Foreign Ministers Mr. **Fuad Hasanovic** and Mr. **Ivan Petkov**; and as observer, Mr. **Hido Biscevic**, State Secretary.

Also participating as special guests were: Mr. **Walter Schwimmer**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe; Mr. **Reinhard Priebe**, Representative of the President of the European Commission; Mr. **Erhard Busek**, Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe; Mr. **Victor Tkachenko**, Acting Head of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina; and Mr. **Yavuz Aktas**, Political Advisor of the SFOR Commander.

2. At this Seventh Summit Meeting within the framework of the South-East European Cooperation Process we have reviewed important developments in the region and the role of the SEECP in consolidating beneficial cooperation among our countries. In this context, we have assessed the level of cooperation achieved since our last Summit held in Belgrade in April 2003, as well as considered new opportunities and ways of further improvements to meet the challenges in all fields of common interest among the Participating States.
3. We are saddened by the tragic death of late President **Boris Trajkovski**. He will be remembered as a wise and far-sighted statesman and leader. Mr. Trajkovski had shown personal vision and commitment in strengthening peace and stability, bringing the whole region - not just his own country - closer towards European integration.
4. We have reiterated our strong and unequivocal condemnation of recent acts of international terrorism, resulting in loss of innocent lives and many injured and we have reaffirmed our strong support to international efforts aimed at defeating this global threat. Acting in solidarity, we are committed to take all necessary and effective measures against all forms of terrorism.
5. We have noted with satisfaction that the process of integration in Europe is developing favourably. In ten days time, on 1 May 2004, the largest European Union enlargement to date will take place, thus bringing the European Union ever closer to the Southeast Europe.

We have expressed our firm belief that the enlargement process will continue, according to the European Council conclusions of December 2003 concerning the candidate countries, as well as for those which expect to meet the criteria and get that status soon. We have welcomed the entry into force of the first Stabilisation and Association Agreement in the region as a contribution to the further strengthening of the European Union Stabilisation and Association Process. We have also expressed our support for the countries that are progressing in the process of negotiations, as well as those which are to start negotiations on Stabilisation and Association Agreements in their efforts to meet the necessary criteria.

The success of each country in upgrading its status with the European Union bears positive impact on the region as a whole.

6. We have heralded the recent enlargement of NATO and have recognised that the new as well as future NATO members will help to further strengthen security and stability in South Eastern Europe. We have encouraged Skopje, Tirana and Zagreb to cooperate closely in the framework of the Adriatic Charter. We want them to succeed and will continue to support their reform efforts through the MAP process. We believe that the NATO Istanbul Summit will be an important event to elaborate clear messages regarding their membership in the next wave of enlargement. We have expressed our expectation that following the current enlargement round NATO's door will remain open.

We have underlined that the Euro-Atlantic partnership, expressed inter alia through the NATO Programme Partnership for Peace, remains an important vehicle for assisting the region to achieve and maintain both stability and security. We have also expressed our anticipation that the Istanbul Summit will assess individual merits and accordingly extend invitations to Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Serbia and Montenegro, to join the Partnership for Peace Programme.

7. We have reaffirmed our determination to promote cooperation among our countries and peoples in accordance with the principles and objectives enshrined in the Charter on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe.
8. We have strongly condemned the recent ethnically-motivated violence in Kosovo, the loss of life, destruction of private property and religious and cultural heritage, which is the common property of all Europeans, as a serious challenge affecting the stability of the region.

Recalling the Tirana Summit Declaration of 28 March 2002, we have strongly deplored such 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 welcomed the decisive steps taken by leaderships in Belgrade and Prishtina in condemning the attacks on religious sites.

We have also condemned the attacks on the troops of KFOR and on the personnel and sites of UNMIK. We have called on all leaders; especially the Kosovo Albanian leadership, to take responsibility for the situation and to ensure such acts and threats of violence are not repeated. Those responsible for the violence must be brought to justice.

We have also emphasized the need for political leaders in Kosovo to work closely with UNMIK and KFOR to ensure the implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1244, the earliest possible return of internally displaced persons, the physical security and full protection of the rights of each individual citizen in Kosovo.

9. In the context of enhanced regional stability as a major precondition for advancement of democratic processes, we have again stressed importance of respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders. In addition, we have underlined the principles of respect for international law and uphold of dialogue as means for peaceful settlement of disputes. Creation of a more favourable political and economic environment and our political will and determination for co-operation are most valuable assets to respond to such challenges, as well as our best answer to those who insist on exclusiveness, violence and extremism.
10. We have stressed that bringing all the indicted for war crimes before justice is a *conditio sine qua non* and must be met without further delay. In that context, we have reiterated our commitment to full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) as one of the major requirements for establishing lasting peace and security, tangible prosperity, as well as the reconciliation process in the region.
11. Recognising considerable progress in security related issues achieved at national level, we have considered international presence still needed in the region. In this regard, a robust NATO-led KFOR remains essential in Kosovo.

Furthermore, we have welcomed NATO's readiness to assess options for its future presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including a new NATO Headquarters Sarajevo. We have also welcomed the European Union's readiness for the ESDP military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the basis of the Berlin plus arrangements. To that end, we look forward to a positive outcome of NATO - EU consultations, as well as consultations with the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We have welcomed the European Union Police Mission Proxima and all ongoing projects of training and transfer of knowledge in security issues and policing to the national authorities in the region. We have considered that the assumption of the Chairmanship in Office of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2004 by one of the participating countries of the SEECP will contribute to the security and stability in the region.

12. We have all shared the conviction that our cooperation is becoming an ever increasing constructive component vital for turning the South-East Europe Region into an area of stability and prosperity. This constructive forward-looking approach of the SEECP is an important instrument of social and economic progress of the participating countries, bringing them gradually closer to the European mainstream.
13. We have fully supported further development of regional cooperation among various regional initiatives. We have noted with satisfaction the recent successful form of cooperation between the SEECP and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe Migration, Asylum and Refugee Regional Initiative (MARRI), which resulted in the First Regional Forum on Asylum, Migrations and Sustainable Return, held in Herceg-Novi, 5 April 2004; hence, encouraging and strengthening the assumption of regional ownership on these issues by the countries of the SEECP.
14. We have pledged ourselves to realize concerted actions and to undertake additional measures for the benefit of practical progress towards achieving the SEECP goals, as well as to furthering confidence, stability and prosperity in the region.
15. Solidarity amongst the SEECP countries has been visible in the preparation as well as in the aftermath of the Thessaloniki European Union-Western Balkans Summit in June 2003, which we valued as a turning point for the region.

We have welcomed establishment of regular political dialogue between European Union and this very part of the South Eastern Europe Region - which has begun to take practical forms, most notably by the work of the Union-Western Balkans Forum and by launching of European Partnership.

Countries of the region are fully aware of the need to build on substantial progress achieved, particularly in the areas of administrative capacity, judicial system and fight against organised crime and corruption - instrumental to meeting European standards.

We have also confirmed our commitment to promote effective economic, social and democratic reforms in the region, leading to the completion of the transition to functioning democracies and market economies, essential for the Process. In this regard, we have encouraged sharing experiences gained in the accession and negotiation processes.

16. In our growing political and economic interdependence, we have shared the conviction that at this stage of consolidation and progress made within the SEECP framework, the concrete joint projects would be given our utmost attention and energy. Consequently, we have urged the need of further developing and adopting national programmes to promote variety of cooperation within the SEECP in order to establish active involvement of ministries and institutions, regions and cities, business associations and other similar structures. In this light, we have particularly encouraged the SEECP engagement in addressing issues related to youth domain.
17. We have expressed our belief that cooperation of our countries would be more effective, solid and developing in close interaction among national parliaments. Considering that parliaments have an irreplaceable and leading role in the process of the ongoing comprehensive transition and democratisation of the region, we praised ever increasing cooperation among regional parliamentarians. In this context, we have welcomed 27 March 2004 Sarajevo Conference of the Presidents of Parliaments of the South Eastern Europe. We have also emphasised the role of the parliamentary dimension of the SEECP in providing consistent support to the regional cooperation and European integration processes.
18. We have noted successful steps taken recently in a number of countries and the region as a whole with regard to fighting organised crime, corruption and terrorism. We have expressed our wish for enhancing cooperation with the Regional Centre for Combating Transborder Crime (SECI Centre) in Bucharest. We have also welcomed the Sarajevo Declaration of the Ministers of Interior or Public Order and State Representatives from South Eastern Europe concerning the fight against organised crime, regarding in particular Data protection and processing, as well as Witness protection, adopted on 18 June 2003, and Sarajevo (Sarajevo II) Declaration concerning the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, adopted during the Conference of the Ministers of Justice and State Representatives from South Eastern Europe on 27 October 2003.
19. We have emphasised paramount importance of further developing the economic cooperation among the SEECP countries as a fundament of lasting regional stability and prosperity. We have agreed on strengthening economic and trade relations among the SEECP countries by implementing and proposing concrete new projects within the Skopje Action Plan.

Democracy, consolidated democratic reforms and political stability largely depend on addressing the core issues of unemployment, lack of investment and low productivity and competitiveness.
20. We have encouraged additional steps to proceed with trade liberalisation in the region, ensuring greater harmonisation standards and exploring options for cooperation on trade in services with a view to achieving compliance with the European Union standards. We have urged governments in the region to consider appropriate actions to abolish non-tariff barriers.
21. We have supported further development of the regional energy market and have regarded it as one of the prerequisites for stable and prosperous economic, political and social developments of the countries. In this view, we highly value the Memorandum of Understanding on the regional energy market in South Eastern Europe and its integration into the European Community internal energy market, signed in Athens, 8 December 2003. An adoption of a strategy for establishing the regional energy market in South Eastern Europe will foster the overall process.

We are strongly convinced that energy infrastructure encompassing regional and European Union electricity exchange, as well as gas and oil transport priority projects, must be developed and modernised in order to ensure effective functioning and utilization of the energy market.

22. Reiterating the crucial significance of constructing and extending regional infrastructure we have welcomed the development of the South East Europe Core Regional Transport Network. We have stressed the importance of further development of the Pan-European Corridors and their consequent linkage with the Trans-European Transport Networks for creating a single European network. We have addressed the European Union for even more active involvement in developing the regional infrastructure.

23. We have stressed the need for speeding up the process of facilitating the movement of people in the region and throughout Europe. Aware of the complexity of this process, we have all shared the conviction for exploring all the possibilities through appropriate arrangements, respecting the European Union commitments of the participating states.
24. We have also underlined the need to discourage the brain-drain from the countries of the region, which tends to become a serious social issue.
25. We have supported the recent initiatives of the SEECP participating countries in the field of cultural heritage of the region and cultural itineraries across the region.
26. We have taken note with appreciation of the Report of the Committee of Political Directors on the Republic of Moldova. We have decided, in accordance with Article 15 of the Annex to the Bucharest Charter on Good Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in South Eastern Europe, that the plenary sessions of the SEECP ministerial meetings may be attended by the Republic of Moldova as a special invitee. Furthermore, in view of the Republic of Moldova's recent request to acquire the status of observer country, we have tasked the Committee of Political Directors to review favourably the request in this direction, in the light of the Bucharest Charter and its Annex.
27. We have welcomed the decision of the Government of the Republic of Croatia to become full-fledged participant to the SEECP. We have taken note with satisfaction that this important decision coincided with the Opinion of the European Commission on Croatia's European Union membership application.
28. We have taken note of the Report on the activities of the Committee of Political Directors which is faithfully mirroring the progress made in the Process. We have encouraged new Chairman in Office and the Committee of Political Directors to continue their efforts and actively pursue feasible and practical possibilities for enhanced cooperation within the SEECP framework.
29. We have expressed our satisfaction with the Report of the Chairman in Office on the activities of the South East European Cooperation Process in the period from April 2003 through April 2004. We have agreed that this practice should be continued.
30. We have expressed our gratefulness to our host, the Presidency and the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina, for successfully organising this Summit Meeting here in Sarajevo. This is another tangible proof of the steady progress achieved so far in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We have reiterated our solidarity with Bosnia and Herzegovina and expressed our full support for its integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures. The City of Sarajevo is again a symbol of cooperation, reconciliation and tolerance.
31. We have decided that during 2005/2006 the new Chairman in Office will be H.E. Mr. **Petros Molyviatis**, Minister of Foreign Affairs.
32. Welcoming the incoming Romanian Chairmanship in Office, we have decided that the next meeting of the Heads of State and Government will be held in Bucharest in 2005.