

SEECP OHRID DECLARATION

OF THE FORMAL MEETING OF THE MINISTERS FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

OHRID, 31 MAY 2013

We, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the South East Europe Cooperation Process (SEECP) Participating States, Mr. Kristian Vigenin, Ms. Vesna Pusić, Mr. Nikola Poposki Chair-in-Office of the SEECP, Mr. Igor Lukšić and Mr. Ivan Mrkić, Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Ms Edith Harxhi, Ms. Ana Trišić Babić and Mr. Naci Koru, State Secretaries Mr. Radu Podgorean and Mr. Igor Senčar, Ambassadors Mr. Haris Lalakos and Mr. Alexandru Prigorschi, have met in Ohrid on 31st of May 2013 at the Formal Meeting of the SEECP Ministers for Foreign Affairs.

With the participation of the Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Mr. Goran Svilanović.

In the presence of the Special Invitees of the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office 2012–2013: European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy Mr. Štefan Füle, Deputy Secretary General of the Central European Initiative Mr. Zoran Jovanovic, Irish Presidency of EU Ambassador Mr. Oliver Grogan, Head of OSCE Mission to Skopje Ambassador Mr. Ralf Breth, Ambassador of Hungary Dr. József Bencze, Deputy Head of Mission Embassy of Sweden Ms. Asa Pehrson, and Mr. Petrit Selimi, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo* as Special Guest of the Chair.

1. BASIC PRINCIPLES

1.1. Reaffirming our commitment to democratic values, regional cooperation and good neighborly relations based on the principles of the UN Charter, Helsinki Final Act, the SEECP Charter, EU, OSCE and Council of Europe relevant documents as prerequisites for ensuring and consolidating stability and security, while further enhancing economic prosperity and advancement towards European and Euro-Atlantic integration based on individual aspirations and progress of respective countries.

1.2. Underlining the vital importance of the SEECP as a unique political forum for regional cooperation in South East Europe (SEE) and of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) as its operational arm.

1.3. Reiterating our commitment to further enhance regional cooperation in SEE on the basis of the principles of regional ownership, responsibility, all-inclusiveness, solidarity and good neighborly relations

1.4. Sharing our common vision for the future of SEE as part of a unified Europe and reiterating that integration in the European and Euro-Atlantic institutions remains an important goal of the region.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

1.5. Emphasizing that the European Union should remain focused on the European perspective of the SEE countries and should continue in a determined manner its confirmed enlargement policy in the light of individual progress achieved by the countries from the region acknowledged by the European Institutions.

1.6. Welcoming the continuation of the NATO open door policy, as reconfirmed in the Chicago Summit Declaration.

1.7. Recognizing the overall improvement of the situation in our region since our last Summit, in particular the renewed spirit of rapprochement and reconciliation on the basis of improved bilateral relations, regional cooperation and other cooperative steps.

1.8. Appreciating the successful implementation of the Strategy and Work Programme 2011 – 2013 of the Regional Cooperation Council and the priorities of the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office 2012–2013.

1.9. Reaffirming our determination to work jointly at regional level in responding to the consequences of the current economic and financial crisis, strengthening the countries resilience to crisis and placing economic recovery and development of the region high on our agenda.

1.10. Welcoming the common regional approach contained in SEE 2020 “Job Creating Growth and EU Integration Strategy” and underlining the need to associate national development strategies with SEE 2020 Strategy in view of consistent implementation of reforms that foster integrated, smart, sustainable and inclusive growth predicated by good governance.

We convened and agreed on the following:

2. A STABLE AND PROSPEROUS SOUTH EAST EUROPE THROUGH A STRENGTHENED REGIONAL COOPERATION

2.1. We expressed satisfaction with the overall situation in South East Europe in terms of bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation addressing economic prosperity, social development and cultural exchange.

2.2. We underlined that the progress attained was a result of the efforts invested in implementation of reforms, policies of reconciliation, good neighborly relations, confidence building measures, dialogue, mutual openness and cooperative attitude to the common needs of our countries.

2.3. We noted with satisfaction that local, parliamentary and presidential elections were held in several SEECP Participating States in orderly and democratic manner thus confirming the increased political maturity in the region since the last SEECP Summit.

2.4. We confirmed our commitment to continue enhancing the process of rapprochement and cooperation as we share common vision for the future of our region based on the rule of law, respect for the universal human rights and democratic values.

2.5. We emphasized our readiness to address open issues urgently and to find mutually acceptable and sustainable solutions through political dialogue and negotiations, on the basis of mutual respect and international law.

2.6. We expressed our determination to continue to build upon the positive momentum created by numerous high level meetings in the region since the last SEECP Summit, with a view to address and solve open issues and ensure long-lasting stability, dialogue and European and Euro-Atlantic perspective of our region.

2.7. We underlined the significance of the achievements within the EU facilitated dialogue, especially reiterating the importance of the “First agreement of principles governing the normalization of relations” and the implementation plan of the “First agreement”. We praised both parties for their courage and vision, confident that they continue to act for the benefit of their peoples as well as for reconciliation and their European perspectives.

2.8 We welcomed the success achieved so far of the high level trilateral meetings aiming at achieving reconciliation among the SEECP Participating States and overall progress across the region as regards fostering good neighborly relations and regional cooperation.

2.9. We reaffirmed our determination to forge a genuine regional partnership for development and prosperity in SEE, particularly through complementing national development strategies with a regional approach. Only through joint efforts at national and regional level, such as those being put forward by the SEE 2020 Strategy “Job Creating Growth and EU Integration Strategy”, we can achieve our short term objective of exiting the crisis and a long term goal of attaining a sustainable economic and social development.

2.10. We considered that disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation is of utmost importance to all SEECP Participating States and confirmed that ongoing and follow up activities should be directed towards the development of concrete initiatives. We acknowledge therefore the role of the Ohrid Joint Statement “Solidarity in Action” as a basis for further focused regional cooperation in the area of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

2.11. We appraised the achievements in regional cooperation and highlighted the need to work through the SEECP and with the RCC on concrete initiatives in direction of enhancing regional cooperation in mobilizing investments and acknowledged that long-lasting stability and security in SEE is dependable on sustained and balanced economic development.

2.12. We underlined the importance of developing regional activities in the fields of economy, transport, infrastructure and energy, according to the expressed interest of the SEECP participating states.

2.13. We expressed our readiness to continue strengthening the rule of law in the region as an element of paramount importance in securing democratic, economic and social development and ensuring good governance, transparency and accountability, and we reaffirmed our determination to continue to cooperate vigorously in the fight against organized crime and corruption.

2.14. We highlighted the need to continue enhancing regional cooperation in the field of building human capital as one of the main pre-requisites for achieving sustainable progress of our societies.

2.15. We appraised the enhancement of our cooperation in the security area and expressed our readiness to advance and broaden regional cooperation in defense and security sectors.

2.16. We emphasized our support to the efforts in strengthening systematic and result oriented parliamentary cooperation in SEE. We reaffirmed our support for further improvement and development of the SEECP parliamentary dimension.

2.17. We called upon the next SEECP Chairmanships-in-Office in close cooperation with the SEECP Troika and RCC to organize thematic Summits and to ensure appropriate follow-up of their conclusions.

2.18. We took note of the need to reflect on the best modalities to make the cooperation within SEECP more effective and result – oriented and we decided to establish an “Ad-hoc Expert Group” to exchange views and to make concrete proposals in this regard. This Group, open to all SEECP Participating States and RCC Secretariat, will work under the coordination of the Chairmanship in Office and will present its conclusions and proposals to the SEECP Political Directors.

2.19. We strongly condemned terrorism and all forms of violence, extremism, racism and xenophobia irrespective of their origin and motives thus reiterating our strong determination in combating terrorism in all its forms and practices.

2.20. We congratulated and wished success to one Participating State for assumption of the Presidency of the Council of the EU for the term January - June 2014, which will further strengthen regional cooperation.

2.21. We congratulated and wished success to one Participating State for assumption of the Chairmanship in Office of OSCE in 2015, which represents a diplomatic success for that country and should provide an important impetus for the South East European region as a whole.

2.22. We congratulated one Participating State for the successful completion of the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (May 2012- November 2012), which represents further integration of the CoE standards in the region.

3. EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE OF THE REGION

3.1. We reaffirmed our strong conviction that the European integration remains vital impetus for the region in general as well as for the attainment of individual national goals, and noted with satisfaction the advancement of SEECP Participating States in their relations with EU.

3.2. We acknowledged that the enlargement process is a strong and credible policy that enables political and economic reforms serving the strategic interest of both the European

Union as well as the entire region, and in this respect we highlighted the achieved progress of the SEECP Participating States.

3.3. We called upon the EU to continue its enlargement policy provided that conditions are met and requirements are fulfilled on individual merit by each of the negotiating, candidate countries, potential candidates as well as aspiring countries from the region, and we are determined to continue working together and assisting each other in the implementation of our common EU accession agenda. We emphasized the importance of the EU enlargement perspective as a factor stimulating further democratic transformation in these countries and extending European values within our region.

3.4. We underlined the significance of further strengthening and enhancing the cooperation of the SEECP and RCC with the EU institutions and EU member states, in particular within the EU enlargement agenda.

3.5. We recognized the importance of public perception of the enlargement process and we call upon EU Institutions to work jointly with the countries of the region on strengthening the support for the enlargement process in EU member states and in the aspiring countries.

3.6. We commended one Participating State for signing the Accession Treaty with the EU and for the positive referendum for joining the EU as 28th Member State as of July 1, 2013. This represents a strong incentive for the region and upholds the enlargement momentum.

3.7. We commended one Participating State for continued progress in the accession negotiations with the EU and taking good note of the achievements in its reform agenda. We expressed our strong support for continuation of its accession process at an accelerated pace.

3.8. We welcomed the start of accession negotiations with one Participating State that reflects its continued progress on key reforms: We expressed our satisfaction with the successful conduct of the screening process in accordance with the agreed calendar of activities. We also took note of the fact that two negotiation chapters have been provisionally closed.

3.9. We welcomed the continuation of the High Level Accession Dialogue (HLAD) of one Participating State with the European Commission as a useful tool for advancement of reforms, providing new impetus to the European agenda thus contributing to substantial progress of the country; while this initiative moves forward the European integration process it should not be seen as a substitute but rather as a bridge towards the beginning of accession negotiations as recommended by the European Commission and the European Parliament since 2009; we took note of December 2012 European Council conclusions, latest Spring Report of the European Commission and European Parliament Resolution of 23 May 2013 and expressed our hope that the European Council would soon reach a decision on the accession negotiations.

3.10. We commended one Participating State for being granted the EU candidate status and we expressed our satisfaction for the European Commission recommending that the

negotiations for the accession to the EU should be opened. We expressed our expectation that the European Council will reach a decision on beginning the accession negotiations, confident that all the agreed principles and efforts in other areas will be carried out as recommended by the European Commission.

3.11. We noted with satisfaction European Commission recommendation to grant EU candidate status to one Participating State, subject to completion of key measures in the areas of judicial and public administration reform and revision of the parliamentary rules of procedure and expressed our expectation that the candidate status will be granted within this year.

3.12. We emphasize our support for one Participating State to continue pursuing its European Agenda in order to secure stable and prosperous future for all its peoples and citizens and keep contributing to regional stability and cooperation. We underline the important role that the international community, the EU, and the region need to play in this process. We emphasize our firm support and deep commitment to the territorial integrity of this Participating State within its internationally recognized borders as well as to political equality of three constituent peoples and all the citizens of this Participating State within its constitutional framework and in line with the Council of Europe standards.

3.13. We welcomed the positive dynamics in the relation of one Participating State with the EU including the completion of the negotiations on the Association Agreement, with a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area and the substantial progress in its visa liberalization process, which completion is within sight. We expressed conviction that this steady progress on its European agenda will continue further advancing the country towards the accomplishment of its European integration objective.

3.14. We support revitalization of the Brdo process initiative on the heads of state level in order to encourage mutual support and exchange of experience gained during the integration processes.

3.15. We called upon the European Commission and RCC to continue to work on the modalities of cooperation with all SEECP Participating States in the priority areas of development in the region and emphasized that RCC should continue playing a role within the current and incoming Multi-beneficiary component of IPA (Instrument for Pre-accession assistance).

4. SEECP – RCC SYNERGY

4.1. We praised the steps taken to enhance regional cooperation and strengthen the principle of regional ownership.

4.2. We reiterated the crucial role of SEECP as the overarching political forum for directing the regional cooperation and setting the priority agendas with the RCC as its operational tool for guiding and monitoring regional cooperation. We stressed the importance of translating political declarations and decisions into concrete projects and programmes for the benefit of the region.

4.3 We praised the increased level of synergy, coordination and cooperation achieved between SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office and the RCC through regular coordination meetings with the participation of the European Union, as a valuable mechanism to further enhance regional cooperation in SEE providing strong impetus to existing forms and to the design of future cooperation activities. We appreciated the joint efforts of the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office 2012–2013 and the RCC undertaken within the framework of streamlining and coordination of task forces and initiatives in SEE.

4.4. We welcomed the results achieved by the RCC and the continuation of the process of undertaking concrete steps within the implementation of the Strategy and Work Programme (SWP) 2011 – 2013, particularly aimed at an efficient and target-oriented, regionally owned and all-inclusive regional cooperation.

4.5. We paid particular attention to RCC Strategy and Work Programme 2014 – 2016 and to the South East Europe 2020 Strategy as its central pillar for which comprehensive consultation process has been initiated; declared our unequivocal support and reiterated our commitments for its successful implementation.

4.6. We recognized the important role of RCC in the development of a SEE 2020 Strategy that was articulated on the basis of Europe 2020 while taking into account the specific characteristics of the SEE region, recommendations of the SEECP Budva Declaration and the initial set of SEE 2020 Strategy headline targets, adopted at the Ministerial Conference of the South East Europe Investment Committee (SEEIC) held in Tirana on 9 November 2012.

4.7. We welcomed the active involvement of the national governments in the SEE 2020 Strategy development and appreciate their commitment to ensure that the Strategy is linked to specific national action plans, which should be implemented by the countries. We praise the RCC for its readiness to develop and put forward a comprehensive monitoring system that will enable the national governments to assess the overall progress in SEE 2020 implementation;

4.8 We welcomed the adoption of the amendments to Annexes I and II of the Joint Declaration on the establishment of the RCC, done in Sarajevo in February 2013, and stressed the importance of active participation and contribution to RCC activities of all RCC Participants.

4.9. We called upon the donor's community to continue with the assistance and support to the region in the light of the priority areas related to the implementation of RCC Strategy and Work Programme 2011-2013 and RCC Strategy and Work Programme 2014-2016.

4.10. We praised the fifth anniversary of the RCC, as evidence of a successful cooperation between RCC and SEECP, and acknowledged that during the five year period RCC has demonstrated exceptional efforts in promoting and strengthening an all-inclusive and regionally-driven cooperation in SEE.

4.11. We expressed our gratitude to the first Secretary General of the RCC Mr. Hido Bišćević for the valuable efforts and results obtained during his mandate.

4.12. We congratulated Mr. Goran Svilanovic as the new Secretary General of the RCC who assumed office as of 1st of January 2013, declared our firm and unequivocal support for the work of the RCC Secretariat and Secretary General Mr. Goran Svilanović, and called upon him to continue the work in achieving defined regional priorities and objectives.

5. SEECP CHAIRMANSHIP-IN-OFFICE 2012-2013

5.1. We expressed our appreciation for the comprehensive and dynamic efforts of the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office 2012–2013 for providing targeted agenda of regional cooperation, and we highly evaluated its implementation through a rich programme of events (listed in Annex) in the priority areas of our cooperation since the last Summit.

6. THE INCOMING SEECP CHAIRMANSHIP-IN-OFFICE

6.1. We expressed our highest appreciation for the effectiveness and dynamism of the present SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office 2012–2013 and we extended our warmest gratitude for the excellent organization of the Formal Meeting of SEECP Ministers for Foreign Affairs in Ohrid on 31 May 2013.

6.2. We welcomed the incoming Chairmanship-in-Office by Romania and we confirmed that the following SEECP Summit will take place in Bucharest in June 2014 under the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office for the period of 2013-2014.

Adopted in Ohrid on 31 May 2013

ANNEX: SEECP CHAIRMANSHIP-IN-OFFICE 2012-2013

1. We commended the informal meetings of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of SEEC Participating States that were held in New York on 27th of September 2012 and 10th of April 2013, as well as formal meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of SEEC Participating States that was held in Ohrid on 31st of May 2013. We also highly appreciated five Meetings of Political Directors held on 10 October 2012, 9 April, 24 April, 15 May and 29 May 2013. These meetings demonstrated a strong commitment of the Participating States to further enhance regional cooperation in order to achieve common objectives.

2. We underlined the importance of three Coordination Meetings of the SEEC Troika with the Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat and the European Union representatives held in Sarajevo on 17 October 2012, 27 February 2013 and 24 April 2013.

3. We commended the successfully organized International Conference dedicated on the 15th Anniversary from the Parliamentary Dimension that was held in October 2012 in Skopje. In addition, SEEC Parliamentary Dimension Working Group held its VII and VIII Meeting (15 October 2012 and 12 February 2013) where the process of institutionalization and further development of the regional inter-parliamentary cooperation was considered and on 27 and 28 of May 2013 in Ohrid. We highly commended the 10th Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the SEEC Participating States where the SEEC Participating States fully supported the transformation of the institutionalization of the SEEC Parliamentary Dimension into Parliamentary Assembly as a regular parliamentary form for exchange of experiences, dialogue and cooperation on issues of special interest for the SEE countries and their citizens, that would act in synergy with the regional and international partners.

4. We also commended the Ministerial Conference on topic “National Museums from SEE – Status, management and partnership” organized by the Ministry of Culture of the SEEC Chairmanship-in-Office 2012-2013 and RCC, which was held on 13 November 2012 in Skopje and were for the purpose of improving the understanding of cultural values and heritage among countries of SEE a Joint Statement was adopted.

5. We expressed our appreciation for the results and conclusions of the fourth Meeting of Heads of Consular Services held on 12 February 2013 in Skopje, which provided the significant value to the process of implementation of national visa policies in the Region and their impact on the free movement of people, goods and services.

6. We highlighted that inauguration of the South East European Health Network Secretariat was held on 7th of March 2013 in Skopje. The event of the inauguration of the Seat of the Secretariat marks a period of transition of the SEEHN towards full SEEHN ownership of this regional process.

7. We commended the Second Meeting of the NGO Network for continuous cooperation in the framework of SEEC, International conference on the topic “European Union through the prism of SEE civil societies” held in Skopje on 16th of April 2013.

8. We highly commended the International Conference – on earthquake engineering “50 years Skopje Earthquake – 50 Years of European Earthquake Engineering” under the auspices of the President Dr. Gjorge Ivanov which was held in Skopje from 29th to 31st May 2013 with common goal to share our expert observations and scientific knowledge in the field of earthquake engineering. We highly appreciate the adopted Skopje Declaration of the International Conference “SE-50EEE” that encourages SEECP Participating States to enhanced regional cooperation in the field of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

10. We welcome the Meeting of the Ministers of Science from the SEE region on the Regional Strategy for Research and Development for Innovation for the Western Balkans, RCC and WB to be held in Skopje on 12 July 2013.

11. We welcome the Conference of the Parliamentary Committees on European Integration/ Affairs of the States participating in the Stabilization and Association Process in South East Europe (COSAP) to be held in September 2013.