

## SEECP BUCHAREST SUMMIT DECLARATION

25 June 2014

We, the Heads of States/Governments of the South East Europe Cooperation Process (SEECP) participating states, Mr. Traian Băsescu, Mr. Bujar Nishani, Mr. Rosen Plevneliev, Mr. Nicolae Timofti and Mr. Filip Vujanović, Deputy Prime Ministers Mr. Beşir Atalay and Ms. Kori Udovicki, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Kyriakos Gerontopoulos, Ambassadors Mr. Duško Kovacević, Ms. Andrea Gustović-Ercegovac, Mr. Pande Lazarevski and Ms. Jadranka Šturm Kocjan have met in Bucharest, on 25 June 2014, at the Summit of the SEECP.

In the presence of the Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Mr. Goran Svilanović, and of the Special Invitees of the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office 2013–2014: Mrs. Atifete Jahjaga from Pristina and European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, Mr. Štefan Füle.

Reaffirming the commitment to abide to the founding principles of the SEECP Charter,

Underling that democracy, rule of law, free market economy, respect and guarantee of individual rights represent the basic values of our societies as well as the pre-requisites of our cooperation,

Stressing the importance of the principles of the UN Charter, the EU, OSCE and Council of Europe founding and relevant documents,

Considering regional cooperation as an all-inclusive endeavor going hand in hand with good neighborly relations towards the achievement of European integration goals,

Taking note of the conclusions of the first meeting of the “Ad-hoc Expert Group” on the future of the SEECP,

Stressing that the SEECP acts in close collaboration with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) as its operational arm, and that regional ownership, all-inclusiveness, accountability as well as sharing a common vision of a stable, prosperous and peaceful SEE, represents a valuable contribution to the European security,

Reaffirming our willingness to furthering economic prosperity and advancement towards European and Euro-Atlantic integration based on the current commitments and aspirations of the SEECP participants,

We agreed the following:

### 1. European perspective and Euro-Atlantic aspirations

1.1. Integration in the European Union remains the main political goal of all SEE states and all regional stakeholders should embark upon making this objective a reality, to the benefit of the population of this region and as a significant contribution to the European stability.

Conclusions of the winter European Council reaffirmed the strong commitment of the EU institutions and Member States towards the work of the South-East European Cooperation Process and the Regional Cooperation Council, the implementation of the existing Association Agreements, progress of the accession talks and eventual signature of new documents reflecting progress of the relationship of the EU with regional actors.

1.2. The enlargement policy in the South Eastern European region should remain a priority on the EU agenda over the next mandate of the European institutions reflected also in the new institutional configuration at EU level. The Union's approach towards the EU enlargement countries needs to be based on a rigorous but fair conditionality, but also on a substantial support offer, including through providing expertise and technical assistance. It is important that EU Member States continue to actively support the EU enlargement to those countries that fully meet the accession criteria and on the basis of the "own merits" principle.

1.3. Enlargement policy's main objective is bringing stability, democracy and respect for the fundamental rights of the citizen. After decades of dedication and constant efforts, integration in the European and Euro-Atlantic institutions became a reality for many of nowadays SEECP participants. In the last twenty years, a series of high level meetings and European Councils stated the commitment to drive forward the enlargement policy on the basis of established criteria.

1.4. We welcomed the renewing of the unequivocal commitment towards enlargement, EU expressed at the European Council in December 2013 and to be reiterated at the next European Council (June 2014) and expressed the belief that coherent implementation of enlargement criteria and conditionalities, together with efforts of candidates and potential candidates is essential for a successful enlargement policy.

1.5. It is important that EU Member States continue to actively support the EU enlargement to those countries that fully meet the accession criteria and on the basis of the "own merits" principle. Special attention should be paid to achieving progress by candidates and potential candidates countries in the area of the protection of rights of persons belonging to minorities.

1.6. Equally relevant, especially in the context of the developments in the Eastern neighbourhood, is for the candidates and potential candidate countries to coordinate more coherently and timely their positions, with the EU including on issues that bear a direct impact on the European stability and security.

1.7 We have reviewed and welcomed the reforms undertaken within the SEECP geographical span, irrespective of the relationship of the participants with the EU and NATO, and stressed that the rule of law, the efficient functioning of institutions benefitting democracy and individual rights, as well as a functional market economy is essential in order to guarantee regional stability.

1.8. At the same time, regional cooperation goes hand in hand with good neighbourly relations and remains an essential part of the enlargement process, as they help build stability, reconciliation and favor addressing open issues irrespective of their source.

1.9. Given the importance of the EU financial contribution to the development of the SEECP region as a whole, we have reaffirmed our commitment for a sound use of EU funding taking into account the regulations applicable to the status of SEECP participants (members, candidates, potential candidates and associates). In this vein, we have insisted on the importance of promoting meaningful projects taking advantage of the new IPA and ENI 2014-2020 framework.

1.10. We have underlined that, aside from financial support, another dimension of the solid bond between the EU and the SEE is represented by the free movement of persons. In this respect, we call on establishment of visa free regime for all SEECP participating states to the EU, in accordance with established criteria. We have congratulated one participating state which made

a resolute step ahead in the free visa regime between it and the EU MS, allowing citizens with biometric passports issued by authorities in Chişinău to travel more easily in the EU since 28 April 2014.

1.11. We have expressed our full support for the imminent signing, at the European Council on 27 June 2014, of the Association Agreement, including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, between the European Union and one participating state, which will bring benefits to the society of this country as a whole. We welcome the choice of Chisinau to firmly advance towards accomplishing its European future and we reiterate our full support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of this participating state.

1.12. We have noted the importance of the Accession conference authorities in Podgorica held with the EU and encouraged the political stakeholders to maintain the pace with a view to work for the accomplishment of a solid track record in the area of rule of law and with respect to the fight against organized crime and corruption, enhancing the capacity to apply the *acquis*. We welcome the progress achieved so far by Podgorica in the negotiation process.

1.13. Commitment of authorities in Ankara to continue reforms in line with EU standards and the Copenhagen criteria was welcomed. We welcome that EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement was signed and Visa Liberalization Dialogue with Turkey was launched.

1.14. We have welcomed the launch of the accession talks between the EU and the authorities in Belgrade and expressed confidence that the pace of reforms will be maintained and all the engagements assumed in the particular framework which led to the opening of the membership negotiations will be respected.

1.15 We took note of the EU Council Conclusions of December 2013. We welcomed the progress so far and the willingness of Skopje to make further progress in promoting the rule of law, including judicial reforms and achieving further results in the fight against corruption and organized crime. We have underlined the importance of engagement in good faith by all involved in solving pending issues in the context of good neighbourliness, cooperation and respect of international law.

1.16 We welcomed the decision of the General Affairs Council of the EU to grant Albania the status of candidate country as an important step on the country's EU integration path. We look forward to the confirmation of this decision by the European Council.

We have commended the willingness of Tirana to implement anti-corruption and judicial reform strategies and other relevant legislation, as well as a continued trend of pro-active tackling of all issues related to organized crime. This progress along with Albania's continued constructive engagement in regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations remains essential and will constitute a solid basis for advancing towards the opening of accession talks with the EU.

1.17. We have noted the importance of reaching an agreement by the Sarajevo leadership on all pending issues related to a steady relation with the EU and the European perspective of the country. We also welcome the dedication of the European Commission to solving all issues with relevant representatives of this state.

1.18 We welcomed the progress in the conclusion of the *Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the EU and Kosovo\**, as a proof of the EU's commitment to the European future of the Western Balkans region as a whole. We commended Prishtina's progress in fulfilling the conditions for the liberalization of the visa regime for short-term travel to Schengen countries and looked forward to further efforts in this respect.

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\* 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.

1.19. We take note of the North-Atlantic Alliance's commitment to enhancing partnerships and promoting open doors policy, in the run-up to the NATO Summit in Wales on 4-5 September 2014, when NATO celebrates the anniversaries of the latest three rounds of enlargement. As underlined in the North Atlantic Treaty and the Strategic Concept, NATO's door should remain fully open to all European democracies which share the values of NATO, which are willing and able to assume the responsibilities and obligations of membership. Taking into consideration their national foreign policy objectives and relevant NATO principles, we encourage SEE states, based on their free will, to enhance their cooperation with NATO, including by seeking membership.

1.20. Complex developments on our continent ask for enhancing cooperation and increasing the bond between regional structures and European institutions, as the former represent a good pre-accession training tool, complementing national strategies for approaching the EU.

1.21. Against this background, the SEECP must remain focused on supporting the European and Euro-Atlantic aspiration of the SEE states and seek, together with the RCC, to develop a more articulated approach in order to bring the fulfillment of the European future of the region.

1.22. European integration represents the key motivation for substantive reforms which will lead to the democratic transformation of the SEE as a whole. Political will is the essential ingredient in this respect, and public support remains essential in the continuation of efforts aimed to demonstrate to all EU MS and to the European institutions that the enlargement process must continue, provided accession requirements are met and considering the individual performance of the negotiating, candidate and potential candidate countries.

## 2. RECENT EVENTS AT EUROPEAN AND REGIONAL LEVEL

2.1. We have discussed extensively the importance of continuing EU enlargement and reached the conclusion that this area of stability, prosperity and respect for the human rights and freedoms has to include those states willing to share these values and which are ready to implement them. The EU has elaborated policies and tools aimed to prepare states for a closer relationship with the EU. These initiatives, such as the Thessaloniki Agenda or the Eastern Partnership contain the key elements aimed to trigger transformation in the economic, social fields, to the benefit of every citizen.

2.2. We expressed our confidence that the enlargement policy will receive a new impetus once the future European Parliament and European Commission will take office.

2.3. We expressed our belief that EU institutions will develop the most appropriate and efficient approaches and policies in order to accomplish strategic and forward-looking goals in relations with the Eastern Partnership countries, in a way which will demonstrate the benefits for the states recipients of this initiative. We welcome the progress Chişinău and Tbilisi have made, and call upon all states of the Eastern Partnership to implement the necessary reforms in order to bring their citizens direct benefits of political association and economic integration with the European Union.

2.4. We welcomed the free and democratic elections in Ukraine, held on 25 May, which led to the election of a new President, representing an important step towards consolidation of the Ukrainian democracy.

2.5. We have expressed our deepest concern regarding events in Ukraine, deplored the loss of lives and condemned violence of all sorts. We expressed solidarity with Ukrainian people and call for immediate stop of violence and commence of dialogue to find peaceful solution to the current crisis. We underline the importance of the respect of principles of international law and give our full support to the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders.

2.6. We have expressed our full support for a substantial dialogue, in the framework inaugurated in Geneva in March, aimed to finding a political solution, based on the full respect of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, with all the rights for Ukraine which are stemming out from this status.

2.7. We encourage the regional cooperation aimed to increase energy security of each state, to alleviate energy poverty and access to supply in every community as a critical priority for the months to come. Building a more efficient, competitive and transparent energy sector should become an important driver for European integration, sustainable development and for preventing challenges to a reliable supply posed by political decisions or arbitrary conditionality. Diversification of gas supply to the region, creating new gas and electricity interconnections between our countries and in relation with the EU energy market, especially to improve energy security for countries critically dependent on external supply, must become a clear expression of the regional and European solidarity.

2.8. We acknowledge the key developments towards the opening of the Southern Gas Corridor and we note Azerbaijan's strategic role in diversifying Europe's energy supplies.

### 3. SEECP – RCC SYNERGY

3.1. Regional cooperation remains an essential tool with particular potential in achieving reconciliation, good neighbourly relations and strengthening the regional ownership. The political-executive dimensions, exemplified by the SEECP-RCC tandem, must continue to serve as a solid basis to deepen cooperation and developing projects mirroring the European aspirations of the region as a whole.

3.2. The SEECP has the main responsibility of a political forum, presenting the main guidelines of the regional cooperation and thus setting the directions of the RCC executive actions in order to help the region to get closer to its European integration aspirations. The EU Member States in the region have an important role, and the candidate and potential candidates must voice their goals and intentions in order to contribute to the coherence of the SEECP-RCC interaction and accomplishment of the common objectives.

3.3 Regarding the request of Kosovo\* to join SEECP, given the commitment to further enhance the role of SEECP on the basis of regional ownership and all-inclusiveness and recognizing the historic agreements reached in the framework of the EU facilitated dialogue, namely the First Agreement on principles governing the normalization of relations and Arrangements regarding regional representation and cooperation, we welcomed the participation of Kosovo in SEECP activities over the last year and we decided to invite Kosovo to participate on a permanent basis in the SEECP activities and meetings, at all levels and on equal terms. The Annex of the Charter of the South-East European Cooperation Process is to be interpreted and applied accordingly, in order to allow the participation of Kosovo in the SEECP activities and meetings, at all levels and on equal terms. We acknowledge that such participation greatly contributes to the strengthening of the regional cooperation, stabilization and security in the region.

3.4. The Ad-hoc Working Group on the future of the SEECP will continue and hopefully conclude, during the next Chairmanship-in-Office of the SEECP.

3.5. The recent results obtained by the RCC are significant and continuation along this path, by the implementation of the Strategy and Work Programme 2014 – 2016 will enhance regional ownership and will boost the inclusive character of the regional cooperation. At the same time, special attention has to be given to the South East Europe 2020 Strategy as a backbone for successful regional cooperation.

3.6. We welcome the South East Europe Baseline Report: Towards Regional Growth, as a first important step in the implementation of the SEE 2020 Strategy: Jobs and Prosperity in a European Perspective. We express our support to the RCC Secretariat in assisting this process aimed at bringing growth, monitoring the progress and facilitating European integration of SEE.

3.7. We underline the importance of regional solidarity, especially in critical moments, such as the recent floods that deeply affected our region. We commend the support offered to the most affected countries of the region, by SEECP participating states, EU Institutions, RCC Secretariat and international community. We believe that this solidarity should continue as long as needed for recovery and reconstruction.

#### 4. SEECP CiO 2013-2014

4.1. The current SEECP Romanian CiO proved that dynamism and relevance of the events are significant for a regional structure and raise the profile of the SEECP. We have noted the number of and the attendance to the ministerial events, as well as the subjects and results of many other level meetings.

4.2. We commended the informal meetings of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of SEECP Participating States that were held in New York on 27 September 2013 and in Bucharest on 18 February 2014, as well as formal meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of SEECP Participating States that was held in Bucharest on 20 June 2014.

4.3. We also expressed our appreciation for convening the first meeting of the Ad-hoc Working Group on the future of the SEECP on 23 April 2014, as well as the three meetings of the SEECP Political Directors held on 6 December 2013, 17 February 2014 and 18 June 2014.

4.4. We stressed the importance of Coordination Meetings of the SEECP Troika with the Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat and the European Union representatives held in Sarajevo on 1 October 2013, 26 February 2014 and 23 April 2014.

4.5. We commended the successfully organized Inaugural Session of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly, held in Bucharest, on 10 May 2014. This first session represents an outstanding moment in the development of the parliamentary cooperation in our region, based on the principles enshrined in the *Charter of good neighbourly relations, stability, security and cooperation*.

4.6. We also praised the focusing of Romanian Chairmanship-in-Office on the topics related to the EU negotiation chapters 23 and 24 and in this regard we commended the Regional Conference on promoting best practices in fighting high-level corruption and on asset recovery, held in Bucharest on 8-9 April 2014, as well as the 9th Conference of the Regulatory Judicial Authorities of the Balkan Area and the Meeting of the Presidents of the Councils for the Judiciary from the SEECP participating states, held on 12-13 May 2014.

4.7. We expressed our appreciation for the results and the Joint Declaration of the SEECP Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs of the SEECP held in Bucharest, on 29 May 2014.

4.8. We welcomed the results of the Regional Conference on Migration Statistics, that took place in Bucharest, 26-27 May, 2014.

4.9. We stressed the importance of strengthening our cooperation in the field of cyber security, one of the most important challenges the region is facing, as it was underlined with the occasion of Regional Conference on Cyber Security "*The impact of the global cybernetic threats – developments and prospects at regional level*" organized on 23 June 2014, in Bucharest.

5. INCOMING CiOs

We welcomed the incoming Chairmanship-in-Office of Albania and the bid of Bulgaria to take over the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office of the SEECP for the period 2015-2016 and we confirmed that the following SEECP Summit will take place in Albania in 2015.

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## **Interpretative Statement of Sarajevo**

This delegation expresses its concerns regarding the unfolding events in Ukraine and considers essential that a solution to the current crisis is found with due respect for the principles of international law.

We appreciate the constructive atmosphere in which this meeting took place and the efforts of the Romanian CiO for a result-oriented Summit. In this spirit, while taking into consideration our concerns regarding remarks on paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6, we made efforts to overcome our hesitations in relation to some of the paragraphs of the declaration.