



Dear Friends,

The Stability Pact held its final Working Tables meeting on 3-4 December 2007 in Tirana. The European Commission wrote recently in its Enlargement Strategy 2007 that the Stability Pact has now largely accomplished its mission, after almost 8 years of activity. It will be replaced by the Regional Co-operation Council, linked to the SEECP. The final handover will take place next February and will finally put the region in the driver's seat of regional co-operation.

Our last working Tables meetings were, I think, extremely fruitful, and useful for our future co-operation efforts. It was an occasion to assess how much the region has changed, since the launch of the Stability Pact as an initiative of the international community. It was also an occasion to assess the legacy of the Stability Pact. The RCC will inherit from the Stability Pact a set of coherent self-sustainable task forces and initiatives, which, taken together, represent an impressive and sustainable regional cooperation program.

But there are key challenges ahead. Implementation of all the recently taken decisions is the first test.

Secondly, the region must prepare for the new challenges ahead, some of which we can anticipate. Others will be entirely new given the pace of change in the world today. I am confident that the RCC and the SEECP will serve the region well, much as the Stability Pact has done over the past eight years.

Ownership translates into responsibility, and both success and failure will now depend on the countries of the region themselves. The road ahead in regional co-operation is clearly marked. A secure, prosperous and democratic region is the final destination and regional ownership and leadership is the key to it.

Erhard Busek, Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe

Final Meeting of the Stability Pact Working Tables debated future of regional co-operation

At the final meeting of the Working Tables of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, held in Tirana on 3-4 December 2007, some 150 participants representing over 60 countries and organisations, including representatives of SEE governments, EU Member States, Canada, Switzerland, the US, the European Commission, the European Council, the European Parliament, NATO, OSCE, debated the future of SEE at this crucial moment of the transformation process of the Stability Pact into the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC).

Each of the three Working Table meetings gave special attention to achievements, lessons learnt and challenges remaining for the RCC with regards to the Stability Pact's various initiatives and task forces.



National coordinators from the SEE parliaments initialled the MoU for Parliamentary co-operation.

Under Working Table I, a Memorandum of Understanding on interparliamentary co-operation in South Eastern Europe was initiated by the Parliamentary National Co-ordinators in the presence of the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria Mr Georgi Pirinski. The Bulgarian Parliament is hosting the Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Co-operation in South Eastern Europe, following the decision of the 6th SEECP Speakers of Parliament meeting.

The discussions under Working Table II concluded that much progress had been made in putting in place a comprehensive regional strategy to stimulate economic development, including substantial developments in energy, infrastructure, trade and foreign investment. This has been complemented by activities in the field of social cohesion. However the meeting noted that considerable investments were still necessary and hence maintaining the strong reform programme is vital.

Under Working Table III, special attention was given to disaster prevention and preparedness in SEE including possible further steps in SEE regional co-operation in this field.

Working Table III: SPOC Secretariat integrates into SECI Centre

The Stability Pact initiative against organised crime (SPOC) is transferring its knowledge and resources into the SECI Centre Legal department. This decision was taken at the last meeting of the Joint Co-operation Committee of the SECI Center in November 2007 in Bucharest. Within the transition from the Stability Pact to the Regional Co-operation Council and the streamlining of the existing initiatives, the countries have considered this step, as part of the process of upgrading the SECI Centre and its interface with EU structures.

The SECI Centre itself will transform and its new name will be SELEC – South-East European Law Enforcement Centre. The negotiations for the Convention of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre are being conducted with the participation of all the present SECI Centre member countries.



SPOC Secretariat Meeting, Bucharest, November 2007



The Stability Pact publishes brochure: "Eight Years of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe: From Stabilisation to Integration". [Web address: <http://www.stabilitypact.org/about/spisanie.pdf>]

Appointment: Mr. Muhtar Kent, one of the active members of the Business Advisory Council for South Eastern Europe, has been appointed for one of the most prestigious jobs worldwide. On 1st July 2008, he will succeed Neville Isdell as chief executive officer of the Coca Cola Company in the USA.

Upcoming Events

16 January 2008 | Brussels
Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council – EAPC meeting

23 January 2008 | Berlin
Government Leaders Forum for eGovernance

8-10 February 2008 | Munich
44th Munich Conference on Security Policy

11 February 2008 | Belgrade
Ministerial meeting – Investment compact

27 February 2008 | Sofia
Final RT and First RCC Meeting

28 February 2008 | Sofia
SEECF Foreign Ministers Meeting

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Working Table II: Ministers pledge increased social dialogue

SEE Ministers have formally called on the Stability Pact's successor organisation, the Regional Co-operation Council, to ensure that employment and social policies are fully integrated among its strategic priorities. This happened in Budva, Montenegro, on 26 October 2007, at the third meeting of the SEE Ministers responsible for employment and social policies under the auspices of the Stability Pact's Initiative for Social Cohesion. Since the launch in 2003 of the so-called Bucharest Co-operation Process on Employment, Ministers regularly review the progress made by their officials in designing and implementing modern employment policies throughout the region. The social partners take an active role in the Process too. Speaking at the meeting, the Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, Erhard Busek advocated building stronger social partnerships, which "provide a consistent policy framework and a focus on competitiveness and also build the necessary consensus among government, social partners and the private sector". The EC Commissioner on Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Vladimir Spidla stressed that social policy must deliver tangible results to all. The Bucharest Co-operation Process on Employment has been implemented with the support of the International Labour Organization, the Council of Europe and the Belgian Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue.

Working Table I: New task force Fostering and Building Human Capital launched

The recent meetings of the Stability Pact Working Tables in Tirana on December 3-4 was an occasion to take note of the positive reaction of the SEE Ministries of Education and Research to the proposal of establishing a new task force Fostering and Building Human Capital. Recently the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and the Task Force Education and Youth proposed the setting up of this new Task Force, with the aim to support and foster regional co-operation in education and in research in SEE.

One of the five priority areas of the Regional Co-operation Council is precisely Building Human Capital. The Working Table I entrusted the Chairmanship (Romania) and Co-Chairmanship (Austria) of the Task Force Education and Youth with the co-ordination of activities that will lead to the elaboration of a profile and a structure of the new task force.



Mr. Cristian Adomnitei, Minister of Education, Research and Youth of Romania, is the current chair of the Task Force Education and Youth.

Working Table II: SEE Governments are strengthening their role in sustainable urban development

In order to tackle the widespread phenomenon of informal urban development, SEE Governments are engaged in a broader reform process that involves improving the overall urban planning process, strengthening municipalities in dealing with planning and development control, reforming land management and administration systems, and developing housing strategies able to better respond to low-income groups' demand. This was one of the conclusions of the 5th Regional Vienna Declaration Review Meeting, held in Podgorica on October 22-23 under the auspices of the Housing and Urban Management Initiative of the Stability Pact (HUMI).

Between 2004 and 2007, HUMI promoted the development of housing markets, including affordable housing options for all sectors of society, as well as sustainable urban development. In line with the transformation of the Stability Pact, regional co-operation initiatives under HUMI will be continued under the leadership of UN-HABITAT as of 2008.

[Modern buildings in Tirana]

