



**REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA**

STATEMENT

BY

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**KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

**AT**

**THE DINNER ON THE OCCASION OF**

**THE WORKING TABLES OF THE STABILITY PACT FOR  
SOUTH EAST EUROPE**

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HOTEL TIRANA INTERNATIONAL

Dear Mr. Busek,

Dear Mr. Biscevic,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Distinguished Gests,

It's a real pleasure for me to welcome you all and to address this gathering of the Stability Pact Working Tables, here in Tirana.

From different points of view, this two-day event in Tirana is an important milestone in the transformation process of the Stability Pact into the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC).

The discussions on specific issues and various initiatives and task forces of Working Tables, putting special attention to the past achievements, to the lessons learnt and the challenges remaining ahead, will give a particular contribution to the creation of a sustainable regional co-operation framework in South Eastern Europe.

Dear Participants,

Over the years, the Stability Pact has played a central role on promoting the democratisation, economic reconstruction, co-operation and development as well as security, for the South East Europe.

Seen from the Region, the merit of Stability Pact is that for the first time in its history it established a *structured partnership*, a genuine political regional dialogue and put a *cross-regional focus* on policies for development. It demonstrated that a regional approach is complementary to national policies and is an important ingredient toward sustainable development.

It has provided an important link between the countries of South Eastern Europe and the EU and NATO institutions, as a proven framework that fosters one of the criteria for membership in the EU and NATO: regional co-operation and good-neighbourly relations.

In contrast to the situation in 1999, when the Pact was launched, today Regional Co-operation is a concept fully accepted by all parties as essential for addressing common problems in the region.

Albeit the difficulties already known, there are positive developments in terms of region's stability and democratization. The region, as a whole, is providing evidence of economic growth and sustainable socio-economic development. A team working mentality is taking root, contributing to a new and positive image of the region.

A key reason for this success can be found in the approach used by the Pact to facilitate co-operation in specific thematic or technical areas, where all partners can only gain from working together.

The Stability Pact initiatives of Working Table 1 have had an undisputable contribution in guiding SEE countries to design their **reform agendas** in line with EU laws and standards. All this based on promoting regional co-operation with *minimum costs*, which proved to be “an added value” and a successful reality for the SEE Region.

In the field of **economic reconstruction and development** the Stability Pact has contributed considerably to improving the overall macro-economic environment for the promotion of sustainable economic development. It has provided continuous pressure to international financial institutions and donors to deliver assistance faster and in a more targeted way. The role of the Pact in improving the economic situation in South Eastern Europe is at a time comprehensive, process and issue oriented.

Through facilitated **trade** intra-regional agreements and the new enlarged CEFTA 2006 agreement, the region is sending an important signal to the investors community, which will find a market of high absorption potential for industrial and consumer goods. "Trade before Aid" became an expression of the Stability Pact philosophy of regional ownership, reliance on self-healing forces and local responsibility for domestic economic development.

Founding a SEE free trade area is a concrete achievement of our regional integration. Nevertheless, this process of market integration cannot be complete without providing conditions for **the free movement of people in the region**. We think that the materialization of the steps in this respect should be a continued priority of medium – term cooperation among our countries in the field of justice and home affairs.

There is no question that **the improvement of infrastructure** is an initial and indispensable stimulus to increased economic growth. It is therefore not surprising that for the countries in South Eastern Europe the quest for support to improving our infrastructure was often the main priority in the Stability Pact. Of the ten defined pan-European corridors, seven of these go through the target countries of the Stability Pact.

The projects of transport infrastructure development have a direct impact on incorporating Western Balkans in the European flows. Therefore, while making also use of the future Regional Cooperation Council structures, (RCC) it is indispensable that we stand for and make a more vigorous lobbying for our own projects in the transport sector, specifically in getting the financial support for their implementation.

After our excellent results on the **Energy Community Treaty**, we should also move faster in materializing and to give life to the Regional Energy Market. This applies, in particular, to projects on interconnections and energy

transmission lines in the region, designed to make this market more effective and increase its impact in overcoming the states of energy emergencies, which affect our countries time and again.

I am sure that these meetings of the Working Tables, will be a good opportunity to analyze both our progress and problematic in these areas. Likewise, it would be a good occasion to ensure the follow up on the part of the structures that will coordinate regional cooperation and the commitment of SEE donors in the future.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are in a crucial period, both for Western Balkans and the future of integration of our countries to the European and Euro – Atlantic structures.

It needs to be underlined that this phased evolution of the Stability Pact into a regionally owned framework should not be interpreted as the international community withdrawing its support or leaving the region on its own.

On the contrary. We are encouraged by the full support that EU has provided to the new regional structures and we are grateful to the group of donor countries that will attach themselves to these structures, as an integral part.

As was underlined by you, Mr. Busek at the Regional Table in Zagreb, “the most important endowment the Stability Pact can transfer to the RCC is the constructive and co-operative spirit, which has developed over the course of the past eight years”.

And let me add, that the SP is passing to the RRC another important and positive element: It’s all-inclusive spirit.

Thanks to this spirit, the SP is the first regional structure to embrace Kosovo in its activities, projects and programs, leaving no “black holes” in the SEE Region.

The process of inclusion of Kosovo in the SP and in the future RCC activities represents an important political and technical aspect of our present and future regional cooperation.

Not only because is already evident that we can’t discuss and implement regional strategies (like refugee return, transport, energy, air traffic control, or fight against organized crime) in the absence of the Kosovo.

But also, because we are convinced that the final solution for the Kosovo will be the status that responds to the aspiration of the people of Kosovo, i.e. a free, independent, democratic, fully functional and multi-ethnic country.

We are convinced that, based to the aspiration of Kosovo people, the final solution for its status will shortly arrive. This process will create new and positive conditions for the full inclusion of Kosovo in all multilateral regional cooperation structures.

An independent Kosovo, with the full support of EU, US, as predicted at the President Ahtisari Plan, will create strong synergy in making the region more secure, stable and more prosperous. Further more, it will consolidate the European and EuroAtlantic trends of the Western Balkans.

Based in this positive background inherited by Stability Pact, it remains important that we maintain and further promote during our common work under RCC activities, the “regional ownership”, as one of the most precious assets produced with our joint work for years on end. In this regard, monitoring the activities in the region, orienting the work of the Secretariats and Task Forces towards accomplishing the primary goals, are also extremely important.

The period of transition from Stability Pact to the new regional cooperation structures, remains particularly important, inter alia, in view of maintaining and further developing the “assets” created, thanks to our common work for years on end.

Certainly, the process is not over yet; hence, Mr. Bishcevic and his associates face a number of issues pending solutions, while there is a limited time available.

Meanwhile, it is our belief that in the months to come, we shall not miss the qualified support of the SP Secretariat, and in particular from our Special Coordinator, Mr. Erhard Busek, who has been and remains one of the most familiar and closest friends of our region.

Thank you, once again, dr. Busek for all your support in assisting our countries and the SEE Region as a whole, during this crucial period of our modern history!

Good luck to you, to Mr. Biscevic and to all of us, on fulfilling the remaining task of this transition period, towards the future architecture for regional cooperation in South Eastern Europe.

Let me reassure you that Albania, will continue to be an active and reliable partner in fulfilling all our common agendas of regional, European and Euro – Atlantic cooperation and integration.

Thank you for your attention.