



**Regional Table of the Stability Pact  
30 May 2006, Belgrade**

**Chairman's Conclusions**

The Regional Table of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe met under the chairmanship of Special Co-ordinator Erhard Busek on 30 May 2006 in Belgrade.

Participants underlined that regional co-operation shall remain of highest priority in order to underpin political stability and economic recovery in the region, to facilitate confidence building and as a supporting instrument for the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the region as whole. They welcomed the reaffirmation of the region's European perspective at the recent Ministerial meeting of the European Union and the Western Balkan countries in Salzburg 11 March 2006 with EU membership defined as the ultimate goal in conformity with the Thessaloniki Declaration recognising the considerable progress the Western Balkan countries have achieved.

The Regional Table welcomed the successful organisation of the referendum in Montenegro and called all parties to fully respect the decision of the people of Montenegro. They encouraged the Governments in Belgrade and Podgorica to enter into direct dialogue in order to reach an early agreement on the way ahead to ensure continued and full participation of both in all regional co-operation processes under the auspices of the Pact.

Given the changed environment in South Eastern Europe, the approach to regional co-operation in South Eastern Europe needs to change accordingly. The Regional Ownership process was initiated one year ago at the Regional Table in Sofia, with the aim of preparing a phased evolution of the Stability Pact into a more regionally owned, streamlined and effective regional co-operation framework in South Eastern Europe. The main tasks of such a framework should be the facilitation of regional co-operation and support for European and Euro-Atlantic integration, while ensuring continued involvement of the donor community, thus preserving the legacy of the Pact.

The Regional Table welcomed the Final Report of the Senior Review Group as a basis for its discussions and thanked the members of the Group, Alpo Rusi, Franz-Lothar Altmann, Vladimir Drobnjak and Goran Svilanovic for their clear and substantial recommendations on the future of regional co-operation in South Eastern Europe. The Table also welcomed the joint proposal of the European Commission and the Special Co-ordinator based on the recommendations of the Senior Review Group.

Participants acknowledged the Declaration of the SEECP Summit in Thessaloniki, 04 May 2006, and the wish of the SEECP to develop from a 'voice of the region' into an 'actor in and for the region'. They noted that the EU Foreign Ministers on 15 May

2006 'emphasised the importance of enhancing regional ownership and encouraged the SEECP to take concrete decisions on its role in the context of the ongoing discussions with the European Commission and the Stability Pact'. Furthermore, the Table noted the preparedness of the Croatian SEECP Chairmanship to work closely with the Special Co-ordinator in defining the relationship between the SEECP and the Regional Co-operation Council.

The Table agreed on the continued need for a regional co-operation framework focused in particular on the following areas:

- Economic and Social Development
- Infrastructure
- Justice and Home Affairs
- Security co-operation
- Building Human Capital

Parliamentary Co-operation should be maintained as an overarching theme to support activities in the above areas

The Regional Table asked the Special Co-ordinator in conjunction with the task forces and initiatives to continue the on-going assessment of regional ownership and recommend individual transition strategies, timelines and required resources in line with the overall regional ownership strategy for endorsement at the next Regional Table in November 2006.

The Regional Table endorsed the attached 'Roadmap towards a Regionally-Owned Co-operation Framework in South Eastern Europe'. The Table thereby decided to establish a Regional Co-operation Council (RCC) to take over the responsibilities of the Regional Table and Working Tables by early 2008. The RCC should be chaired by a Secretary General from the region to be nominated by the SEECP at the latest on the occasion of the SEECP Summit in spring 2007, which shall be held back to back with the Regional Table. The Table agreed to transform the current Stability Pact Secretariat in Brussels into a supportive secretariat of the new regional structure. The Secretary General would head the Secretariat and also provide support to the SEECP Chairmanship. A decision on the location of the RCC Secretariat will have to be taken by the countries of the region in due time. Considering the importance of close relations with EU institutions, a Brussels based representation office was considered important. The Table requested the Special Co-ordinator and the SEECP Chairmanship to ensure close co-ordination in the process outlined above.

All participants agreed on the principle of co-financing of the future regional set-up, and in particular of the RCC Secretariat between the countries of the region, the European Commission and the interested donor community. The participants agreed that a clear funding scheme to finance the RCC Secretariat, to become effective by February 2008, should be developed for endorsement by the next Regional Table in November 2006. It requested the Special Co-ordinator and the Croatian SEECP Chairmanship to facilitate the development of such a scheme between the countries of the region, the European Commission and the interested donor community.

Participants appraised the efforts undertaken in the six core objectives and the overriding security area. It also considered how best to overcome obstacles in implementation. For the three Working Table, participants noted the following:

- **Working Table I (Democratisation and Human Rights)** discussed the launching of the Core Objective Fostering and Building Human Capital, proposed in particular by the countries of South Eastern Europe as a new focus for regional activities. The Stability Pact Secretariat and relevant SP initiatives in close co-operation with European institutions and donor countries agreed to focus activities on the Access to EU networks of Knowledge; lobbying for sufficient financial means for education with the donor community, in particular via the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and Continuation of the measures for capacity-building, training and knowledge transfer in the region. As far as Parliamentary Co-operation is concerned, the Working Table pointed out that enhanced co-operation among regional parliaments on concrete thematic areas should facilitate better understanding and progress in the reform process vital for European integration. The Pact will continue to support the Parliamentary Troika activities, which will this year concentrate on security issues, budgetary control, judiciary reform and freedom of the media. In the framework of the regional ownership process regionally driven parliamentary co-operation initiatives will play a more important role. Continued support will be given to gender mainstreaming. The Table noted that a first Conference of Women Ministers will be organised in Dubrovnik in July. The Table took note of the accomplishment of the main objectives of the Media Task Force and the upcoming evaluation project on ten years of media assistance to SEE. The Media Task Force will come to an end at the next Regional Table.
- **Working Table II (Economic Reconstruction and Development)** welcomed the political launch of negotiations by SEE Prime Ministers in Bucharest on 6 April for a single free trade agreement in the region. This will be achieved through the simultaneous enlargement and amendment of CEFTA and the Working Table supported the request by some countries that the technical negotiations proceed as quickly as possible with a view to initialling a modern, inclusive and ambitious agreement at the CEFTA summit planned for end September 2006. The conclusion of this agreement will contribute to the overall business climate and will be complemented by the adoption of the Regional Investment Reform Index at the forthcoming meeting of SEE Ministers of Economy in Vienna in June. WTII also noted the impending entry into force of the Energy Community Treaty and called upon the participating parties to use the institutions established under the Treaty to enhance co-ordination amongst others to deal with possible disturbances in energy markets. The continued importance of ensuring that adequate social policies including urban management underpin economic reforms were highlighted by several parties. The WT also discussed the work underway to develop appropriate transition strategies for its various initiatives and emphasised the need for SEE countries to carefully consider those areas where they believe regional co-operation mechanisms were required. It was agreed that detailed strategies would be put forward for the next WT II meeting.
- **Working Table III (Security Issues)** focused on the fight against organised crime and corruption and security co-operation in South Eastern Europe. Progress on both these issues is essential for social and economic development and European integration, as was emphasised by Special Co-ordinator Busek. The meeting noted progress on transferring the leadership and full ownership of its initiatives to the countries of South Eastern Europe. Delegations from the region contributed specific suggestions on how this transfer could be further strengthened; international partners, while

welcoming the increased leadership of the countries of the region, indicated their willingness to remain involved in these regional initiatives.

Based on the strong interest voiced by the countries of the region at the Regional Table in Prague in November 2005 and the Action Plan elaborated by the Secretariat, the Table agreed on making 'Building Human Capital' a new Core Objective replacing 'Local Democracy and Cross-Border Co-operation'. A review conference in autumn will take final stock of achievements reached in the latter area for consideration at the Working Table I and the Regional Table in November.

Considering the initiation of talks on the status of Kosovo, the Table acknowledged the considerable progress in integrating Kosovo into regional activities and requested the Special Co-ordinator to continue to foster this integration in full compliance with UNSC Res. 1244 and to continue to facilitate sub-regional dialogue involving all interested parties in relevant Stability Pact activities, based on its inclusive regional and multilateral participation.

Participants expressed their gratitude to the host of the Belgrade meetings and agreed to hold the next Regional Table in Bucharest in November 2006. It was also agreed that the Regional Table in spring 2007 should be held back to back with the SEECP Summit in Croatia.

## ROADMAP TOWARDS A REGIONALLY OWNED CO-OPERATION FRAMEWORK IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

**The goal:** sustaining focused regional cooperation in South East Europe through a regionally-owned and led framework that also promotes the region's EU and NATO integration.

**The approach:** an increasing degree of political, financial and staffing ownership by the countries of the region with participation by the EU and interested donor countries and organisations to preserve the SP legacy as a forum for regional co-operation and Euro-Atlantic integration. The aim is the phased evolution of the current Stability Pact into a more streamlined and effective regional co-operation framework in which the South East European Cooperation Process, if successfully strengthened, should play a central part.

**The means:** Establish a Regional Co-operation Council (RCC) to take over the responsibilities of the Regional Table and Working Tables. The RCC would be chaired by a Secretary General designated by SEECP. The Secretary General should be a strong political figure from the region whose task would also be to support the rotating SEECP Chairmanship and to head a small, operational secretariat staffed largely from the region.

**The tasks of the RCC:** to co-ordinate regional co-operation processes, to provide guidance to the Secretariat and the Secretary General and to operationally support and prepare – as appropriate – SEECP Ministerial meetings and Summits. The RCC, open to all partners active in South Eastern Europe, would meet annually at the Senior Civil Servant level or above in an inclusive format and quarterly in a limited format with the whole SEE region, the EU Troika and those donor countries contributing to the RCC budget. Meetings on the Ministerial level should in principle be organised in the SEECP framework.

### **Priorities for regional co-operation:**

- **Economic and Social Development:** Regional Trade and domestic and foreign investment, in particular the proposed single free trade agreement and a regional investment framework; this work should also be supported by the private sector, building upon existing arrangements and underpinned by adequate social policies.
- **Infrastructure:** Transport Infrastructure with a focus on the main Corridors in SEE, Energy (including Gas), Environment, Airspace, electronic SEE; regional planning processes and full involvement of the international financial institutions will be crucial to achieve these goals.
- **Justice and Home Affairs:** notably the fight against Organised Crime and Corruption, including support for enhanced regional law enforcement cooperation through the SECI Regional Centre for Combating Trans-border Crime and for enhanced cooperation between the SECI Centre and Europol;
- **Security co-operation: Security Sector Reform, including defence conversion** and combating the spread of illicit small arms and light weapons; co-operation with regional frameworks outside the context of the Stability Pact such as SEDM, SEEC and SEEBRIG needs to be further developed;

- Building Human Capital: Education, technical and vocational training, research and science in general as well as capacity building in public administration in particular.
- Parliamentary Co-operation as an overarching theme to support activities in the above areas

**Implementation:**

- Beginning with the Regional Table in Belgrade in May 2006, elaboration and implementation of individual and clear strategies for each SP Task Force and Initiative to be completed by the end of 2007;
- Initial funding commitment by SP donors and all regional countries for the 2007 transition strategy as well as for the new, slimmed-down secretariat at the Belgrade Regional Table; co-financing by the region for the RCC secretariat to be decided by the Regional Table in November 2006.
- An SEECP decision on its relation to the RCC and its secretariat, including the designation of a Secretary General from the region, at the latest by the SEECP Summit in May 2007;
- The new RCC set-up in place with the inaugural meeting by February 2008, when the hand-over from the Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact to the Secretary General takes place.

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