



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

**Statement by the OSCE Secretary General,
Ambassador Marc Perrin de Brichambaut,**

**Final Meeting of the Stability Pact's Regional Table and
Inaugural Meeting of the Regional Co-operation Council
Sofia, February 27, 2008**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by thanking the Special Co-ordinator for the Stability Pact, Dr. Erhard Busek, and the Secretary General of the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC), Ambassador Hido Bisčević, for their kind invitation to participate in these important meetings.

I would also like to thank the Bulgarian Government, as the Chairmanship in Office of the SEECP, for the support provided to the establishment of the RCC, and for hosting this historical event.

Today we celebrate a successful conclusion and a new beginning.

Over the course of the past nine years, the Stability Pact has achieved significant progress in its diverse and interconnected areas of work covering democracy, economic development and security. Its initiatives have enabled the states of the region to make crucial gains in the fields of trade, energy, investment promotion, advancement of the knowledge-based economy, the fight against organized crime and corruption, disaster preparedness and prevention and parliamentary co-operation, to name just a few.

The broad range of issues covered by the Pact has contributed to its overarching goal of sustaining security, stability and prosperity, in South Eastern Europe and in Europe as a whole, by fostering regional co-operation and integration.

Throughout this process, the OSCE and the Stability Pact have worked closely together. By virtue of our shared values and our common, cross-dimensional approach to security, we have co-operated in such areas as small arms control and destruction, protection of the rights of the Roma and Sinti communities, work toward gender equality and human rights more broadly, and economic development.

For all of the important successes we have achieved together, I wish to thank and to congratulate Dr. Busek, the countries of the Region and the Stability Pact for their unfailing commitment to making South Eastern Europe a more stable, prosperous and secure region.

Like the Stability Pact, the OSCE devotes great attention and resources to South Eastern Europe. Seven OSCE field presences in the region work to promote democratization, economic and human development and assist the host Countries in implementing the OSCE commitments. As the RCC takes up its work in the priority areas of Justice and Home Affairs, Security Co-operation and Economic and Social Development, it can surely benefit from the experience of these missions.

In facing the challenges that lie ahead, the Regional Co-operation Council and the OSCE should continue to work with other international actors to promote stability, security, prosperity and co-operation in the region. The establishment of the Regional Co-operation Council is a clear illustration of the progress achieved in tackling issues common to all states of South Eastern Europe, and of the willingness of those states to assume leadership and responsibility for their future. By being here today, you are demonstrating your readiness to continue to work toward the common aspirations of strengthening democratic institutions and promoting integration within South Eastern Europe and beyond.

The Regional Co-operation Council's priorities largely correspond to the OSCE's own areas of activity. This makes us natural partners in addressing the challenges faced by South Eastern Europe, and we in the OSCE are determined to exploit the full potential of our co-operation.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is no secret to the people in this room that the handover from the Stability Pact to the Regional Co-operation Council comes at a particularly challenging moment for the countries of this region and their efforts to take their rightful place at the center of a Europe whole, free, prosperous and at peace with itself and with the world.

As Foreign Minister Kanerva, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, has said, our work in Kosovo remains unfinished. Despite differences between OSCE participating States, indeed among RCC member states, over Kosovo's legal status, all of them seem to realize that our role in promoting democratization, the rule of law, and human and minority rights in conformity with OSCE's principles, standards and commitments, continues to serve the interest of all of Kosovo's citizens. Indeed, the OSCE is ideally placed, with its deep expertise in promoting inter-ethnic dialogue and adherence to international human rights standards, and its field presence in all municipalities throughout Kosovo, to play a key role in the development of a multiethnic and tolerant society. We hope that we can count on your support in carrying forward this mission at this difficult time.

In closing, let me once again say that the OSCE looks forward building upon the legacy established by the Stability Pact, and to working closely and successfully with the Regional Co-operation Council. I have already met with the Council's Secretary General, Ambassador Hido Bisevic, in Vienna and will soon visit him at the RCC Secretariat in Sarajevo. I am confident that co-operation between our organizations will greatly benefit from the existing network of OSCE presences in the area and that our contacts, exchanges and collaboration will continue to intensify.

Thank you.