

Address
by Under-Secretary of State
at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland,
Grażyna Bernatowicz
Meeting of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe
Sofia, February 27 2008

Support for regional cooperation is a crucial component of Polish foreign policy - as eloquently demonstrated by our many years of cooperation in the framework of the Visegrad Group, the Central European Initiative and the Council of the Baltic Sea States. That is why Poland was one of the signatories of the Stability Pact (SP) in 1999. Since then we have actively contributed to the works of the Pact, mainly by strengthening regional security through the participation of Polish military contingents in Kosovo (KFOR) and Bosnia-Herzegovina (EUFOR), involvement in international police forces – UNMIK, activity of Polish experts assigned to OSCE missions in the region and various other undertakings.

Poland has also been contributing to the implementation of the Pact's goals through initiation and co-financing of projects involving Polish NGOs and government partners. Since the Pact was launched, we have carried out a number of training and internship projects in support of administrative capacity enhancement and civil society building in Kosovo, Serbia, Albania, FYROM and B-H. Poland has organized workshops, training courses and conferences; we have compiled expert opinions on social security, decentralization of central and local authorities, education, trans-frontier cooperation and NGO activity. Furthermore, Poland has given financial support to SP-related international programs and projects, such as the program of the International Organization for Migration (OIM) designed to retrain soldiers leaving service in B-H, the program of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to assist refugees in the Balkans, the Canadian government's program on the destruction of ammunition for small arms and light weapons in Albania, and many others.

In 2007 Poland transferred a substantial sum into the special fund of the B-H Prosecutor General, thus responding to the letter of the previous High Representative, Schwarz-Schilling, of June 21 2007, addressed to the member states of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) and the EU. The money was used to co-finance investigations against the perpetrators of war crimes in B-H (including at Srebrenitsa). We also provided financial backing for efforts to trace missing persons on the territory of B-H. October 2007 saw the launching of a Polish-financed mine-clearing project in Sarajevo.

Simultaneously, we have been actively involved in the PS scheme to share transformation and accession experience with countries in the Western Balkans and Croatia. The MFA acting jointly with the Polish Office of the Committee for European Integration, and other ministries, last year organized study and monitoring visits, as well as workshops and internships for Western Balkan partners, at Polish institutions implementing EU programs. The College of Europe at Natolin near Warsaw has provided training for local leaders from Kosovo, while civil servants have received Polish-sponsored training in Pristina. The last two years have also seen growing engagement of Polish specialists in programs concerning equipment supply for the JHA sector.

As member of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), Poland will continue to support undertakings in benefit of the Western Balkans and Croatia. The relevant funds have been allocated in the state budget and we are elaborating a new formula of collaboration with the designated partners.

In conclusion allow me to express satisfaction at the results attained by the Stability Pact; I convey particular congratulations to Doctor Erhard Busek, Special Co-ordinator of the SP for South Eastern Europe. The Pact has substantially boosted stability in the Balkans, enhanced political and economic reforms and stimulated regional cooperation. Let me also wish every success to Mr Hido Bišćević, Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council, who will now face numerous challenges. I hope that the Council, as successor to the Pact, will help extend the area of democracy, security and prosperity in the region.