



**REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

DRAFT

GREETING/ STATEMENT

BY

**MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
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AT

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

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Excellencies,
Honorable Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a distinct pleasure for me to be here with you today, at this important Meeting of the Working Tables of the Stability Pact.

The core of the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe found over 8 years ago has been the strengthening of regional cooperation. I think that its role and the results of cooperation under its umbrella have been noticeable.

The Stability Pact was designed as an engine scheduled to serve the restructure of a Southeast Europe; the latter had numerous needs and requirements in terms of democracy and free market economy and was supposed to offer the economic stability and sustainable growth.

Thanks to its 8 year-old performance since its founding day in 1999, the Pact has become a renowned regional actor.

The Pact's contributions are valued on the following grounds:

- First, I would like to underline the fact that the Pact has had an essential impact in softening up the political climate in our region, which, we have to admit, was not free from problems.

- The Pact has contributed to strengthening regional cooperation on several significant areas; let me just single out the establishment of the Free Trade Area. Hence, it goes beyond doubt that the signing of CEFTA last December by all the countries of the region represents a significant economic undertaking but also a strong political commitment vis à vis regional cooperation, in presenting this grouping as an economic space of its own.

Another significant undertaking of the Stability Pact was the finalization of the *Treaty establishing the Energy community between EU and SEE*.

Thanks to the implementation of this Treaty, the countries of the region have become part and parcel of the EU internal market in one of the key economic sectors, even though these countries are not EU members yet.

- The Pact has also served to solidify political dialogue, offering in this way a valuable contribution in averting crises. The specifics of this dialogue was that, both the individual countries and the region as a whole had to grapple with intricate challenges, such as the issue of Kosovo is.

Furthermore, let me also underline that the Pact ranks among the first regional initiatives that invited Kosovo to be its partner at all the working regional fora.

Kosovo is a unique case, therefore it demands a unique solution, which cannot be a

precedent for other conflict cases.

Albania joins the assessment that the achievement of an agreement between the both parties is preferable; however, in case of failure in finding a solution on Kosovo's status through compromise, due to an unilateral deadlock, then the EU, NATO and USA should launch the diplomatic initiative for the implementation of Ahtisaari's Plan and provide all conditions, so that the new state of Kosovo would join the family of the nations and together with other countries of the region it would move ahead towards EU and NATO integration. The patience of Kosovo leadership and people has been both exemplary and democratic, but it cannot last forever.

Albania considers that the rapid and final solution of Kosovo's issue, with the strong international support based on Ahtisaari's Plan is a necessity imposed by the reality and awareness in Kosovo as well as the interests of stability and security in the region. Mr. Ahtisaari's Plan is the only viable alternative of compromise, which offers a fair, realistic, balanced, lasting and long-term solution, which enjoys the support by EU, NATO and most of the UN Security Council members. Ahtisaari's Plan guarantees not only the territorial integrity of Kosovo, but also the integrity of its institutions at all levels. This Plan fulfils the lifelong aspiration of Kosovo people; as in no other country, it provides the highest legal standards for Serb minorities in Kosovo; it further ensures stability and peace in Kosovo, in the region and beyond; and it finally guides the Balkans towards the EU and Euro-Atlantic integration, encouraging regional cooperation, increasing foreign investments and raising economic prosperity.

While sharing the belief that the independence of Kosovo is irreversible and inevitable, Albania calls on the political factor of Kosovo to keep away from any unilateral action and cooperate closely with the international community as to date. It is high time that they demonstrate the same responsibility, flexibility, self-restraint and maturity **during** and **after** the 120 additional days of talks (which are close to be finished within one week) and prepare the necessary legislation, in view of providing the ground for the implementation of the final status decision.

Today, by the end of the year 2007, we may see that Southeast Europe has changed its image notably.

The Pact has as well tried to comply with this new tableau. I do think that its ability to adjust and keep abreast of the situation and new developments is a typically distinctive feature of this Pact.

The Regional Cooperation Council, (RRC) which will start its activity soon after, is the best illustration thereto.

In its day-to-day work, the Pact has attempted and achieved a lasting maturity of its regional ownership of assets.

It has to be underlined that these assets will continue to be valuable for our region in the future as well. They will benefit the major investment laying ahead in the region- its project of further European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

I hope that in view of the legacy of Stability Pact and the future contribution by the participating countries and various donors, the Council of Regional Cooperation will reflect a regionally - owned modern operational structure, designed to further strengthen regional cooperation.

We stick to the opinion that the close inter-action between RRC and the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECF) should not only be a permanent target, but also a vehicle/*driving force* in achieving the medium and long-term results.

I think that we all have to thank the Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact, Mr. Erhard Busek for his distinct contribution. by virtue of his high stature of a European personality, Dr. Busek has succeeded in leading regional cooperation to the right direction.

While concluding my statement, let me wish full success to the Meeting of the Working Tables of the Stability Pact and to all the participants a pleasant stay in Tirana/ Albania.

Thank you for the attention!