



**Opening remarks by Special Coordinator Erhard Busek
Working Table III Meeting, Belgrade 29 May 2006**

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1. The meetings of Working Tables II and III today and of the Regional Table tomorrow will be focusing on the same theme: How can we transfer the leadership and the full ownership of the regional cooperation processes which we have jointly developed over the last seven years within the Stability Pact to the countries of South Eastern Europe? And how can international partners continue to support these processes?

Today and tomorrow I would like you to help us in answering these questions, and in particular the views from our friends from South Eastern Europe are needed. Let the voice of the region be heard!

2. Working Table III is addressing security issues across the board: fighting organised crime and corruption, regional law enforcement cooperation, border management, civil protection, small arms and light weapons proliferation, and defence conversion. The security sector, including justice and home affairs, is a crucial dimension of each society and its reform is an essential part of the political reform process underway in each of the SEE countries. The security sector reform is a precondition of social and economic development, and for EU accession.

3. We are moving ahead quite well in many of the specific areas of security sector reform. It is important to monitor such progress and to put it on record. Today my colleagues of the SPOC Secretariat in Bucharest will circulate two matrixes with updates on progress in South Eastern Europe on introducing and implementing anti-organised crime and counter-terrorism legislation. Colleagues of the anti-corruption initiative SPAI have published similar matrixes on anti-corruption legislation, and MARRI colleagues have just issued an overview of SEE readmission agreements.

4. Updating legislation, training and capacity building, and establishing national institutions responsible for implementation are tremendously important. But ultimately it is implementation - achieving tangible results - which matters, and which increasingly is being used as the principle yardstick for measuring each individual country's reform process ... and its progress towards the European Union. This comes through loud and clear in recent political discussions and media reports.

5. The Working Table will receive short keynote presentations on progress within two initiatives on their way towards regional ownership. These two cases represent successful examples of regional cooperation, but they are also among the priorities for the future regional cooperation agenda identified in the report of the Senior Review Group. Therefore, colleagues from SEE around the table, your comments on these priorities - anticorruption (SPAI) and defence conversion (RACVIAC) – are needed. What will your governments do to make these initiatives sustainable as instruments for enhanced regional cooperation? In my view full regional ownership entails at least the following:

- High-level support to select a specific subject as a political priority AND as a priority for regional cooperation,
- Political support for ministries and their experts as well as for other national representatives participating in specific forms of regional cooperation,
- Willingness to invest national financial resources and expertise in regional cooperation and in the regional cooperation mechanisms concerned.

6. The report of the Senior Review Group is also quite clear regarding the need for continued support by international partners, with their expertise and with financial assistance. We will listen with great interest to their contributions to the debate today and tomorrow. From my side I have been raising with the European Commission the possibility of financial support - from the new Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) - for the programmatic activities of SPAI, DPPI and MARRI, to mention some examples. Programmatic activities such as anticorruption and migration management directly relate to the EU's own substantive agenda and with important EU accession requirements.

7. I will conclude my statement with some remarks on the Working Table's agenda for the remainder of the year.

- I strongly support the efforts by the anti-organised crime initiative (SPOC) and by the Police Forum to strengthen their partnership and daily cooperation with the SECI Centre. SECI, SPOC and the Police Forum, together with the public prosecutors network SEEPAG, represent important ingredients for regional anti-organised crime law enforcement cooperation. Their coalition has to support SEE national governments law enforcement authorities in achieving the tangible results needed in the fight against cross-border organised crime. To work on a common agenda also with Europol is crucial for progress in this sector.
- I commend the results achieved so far in fighting the illicit spread of small arms and light weapons in SEE by SEESAC. I note that SEESAC's excellent results have now resulted in direct support by the European Commission. SEESAC's expertise is now also being used in neighbouring regions. Successful regional cooperation will be noticed and will deserve credit for the region - in Brussels and elsewhere.
- The potential of some of the initiatives is far greater than the use made so far of that initiative. The potential of MARRI to develop into a real centre of excellence and regional cooperation on migration issues in the Western Balkans is an example. I call on the governments concerned to invest more efforts in MARRI's agenda which is so crucial to EU accession. With the adoption of MARRI's strategy and program 2006-2007, and with the appointment of an excellent new director for the MARRI Center the conditions for a real 'take-off' are there!
- Before the end of the year a decision will be taken about the Ohrid border process: to continue in some way or to conclude the process. I note that the implementation of the crucial Ohrid commitment to demilitarise all borders has not yet been fully achieved, and may not be achieved before the end of the year. I suggest that this should weigh heavily in a final decision.

- Finally, I strongly support the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention initiative's proposed project to strengthen cooperation among the countries along the Danube and other major rivers in SEE to better prepare for flooding disasters. In other parts of Europe such cooperation among riparian countries is quite normal, as you will appreciate. I agree that this project is of great importance and would deserve to be launched at a high-level conference, possibly in late September.

Thank you.