

**Croatian Statement on the SEECP Summit
666th Meeting of the Permanent Council
17 May 2007**

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to inform our distinguished colleagues of an important event which took place last week in Zagreb, Croatia, where on 11 May the **10th Meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the South-East European Co-operation Process (SEECP)** was held. The meeting resulted in several conclusions which will have a profound impact on the region.

Europe's New South East represented an occasion to bring together high level participants from the countries of the region, partner countries, international community and financial institutions. The SEECP pS welcomed in particular the presence and contribution of the President of the European Council, Chancellor Angela Merkel, President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso and many others including the SG of the OSCE Marc Perrin de Brichambaut,; all of them confirming the European future for the region.

By adopting *Protocol to the Charter on Good Neighborly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in South Eastern Europe, Zagreb Declaration and Zagreb Final Act*, the adherence to the common vision of a Europe united, free and at peace was stated and significant role of the SEE in contemporary European and Euro-Atlantic integration processes was underlined. All documents have been distributed under the reference number SEC.DEL/63/07).

The President of Croatia, Stjepan Mesić in his speech reminded of that spirit when recalling of the beginning of the process of European integration where " political will of the until yesterday warring sides prevailed; this is the will to resist the wheel of the past and – aware of what it was and what is now behind us but also focused on that what is now before us – to turn the wheel to prosperous future".

The Meeting also made an appraisal of the progress in the SEECP area since the Ninth Thessaloniki Summit in 2006. Reiteration of the European perspective of the region, involvement of the SEECP in reaching a solution for the future status of Kosovo and finally, institutional enhancement of the SEECP, represents some of the most outstanding achievements of this process. Montenegro was welcomed as full fledged pS and the presidency was handed over to Bulgaria.

Prior to the holding of this Meeting, on 10 May, the Stability Pact's Regional Table meeting adopted the Regional Co-operation Council's (RCC) Statute and promulgated the key decisions on the future of regional co-operation which were later approved by the Heads of State and Government; Mr. Hidaet Bišćević from Croatia was appointed as the first RCC's Secretary General and Sarajevo was designated as the seat of the Secretariat. This move represents the final stage of the transition from the internationally led Stability Pact to the

regionally owned RCC. The full transfer of responsibilities to the newly established body is envisaged to be completed by February 2008.

The Regional Co-operation Council, as successor of the Stability Pact, will bring together SEECP pS and UNMIK/Kosovo as well as the EU and the wider international donor community, thus preserving the character of the Pact's Regional Table, as a unique setting where the region and the international community co-operate on an equal footing.

The Heads of State and Government endorsed those decisions as a proof of the regional commitment to building Europe's South East as an area of stability, prosperity, and at peace with its neighbors. This is an area which is embracing European values and standards and finding its way in Europe. The importance of increased involvement of the region was underlined by the Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader in his closing remarks:

"I am confident that our achievements today constitute the first step towards building Europe's Southern Dimension and thus affirming the potentials of South East Europe."

Mr. Chairman,

At the end allow me to express our gratitude to the OSCE and to the SG for his participation in this meeting. Exchange of views during his visit with the President of Croatia, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs on a number of topical issues will further strengthen the cooperation between Croatia and the OSCE and reaffirm Croatia's commitment *vis a vis* the Organization.

Thank you.