



*Permanent Mission of the Republic of Croatia  
to the International Organizations in Vienna*

***Statement by H.E. Vladimir Matek,  
Permanent Representative of Croatia to the OSCE,  
at the 608<sup>th</sup> Plenary Permanent Council,  
under "Current Issues" Agenda item  
Vienna, 11 May 2006***

Mr. Chairman.

Since Croatia is now holding chairmanship of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), I would like – on behalf of all Member States of the SEECP – to inform the Permanent Council on the outcome of the Thessaloniki Summit, that took place on 4 May..

I first would like to thank the Secretary General for his participation in this meeting of the Heads of States and Governments and his positive assessment of this regional initiative in the speech he pronounced there.

We believe that this gathering was a very fruitful one. In this context, I would like to underline the significance of the adoption of two important documents. The first one is the “Thessaloniki Declaration”, which, under the motto “Together in Europe”, is divided inter alia into the parts dealing with European Perspective of South Eastern Europe and the Institutional Enhancement of the SEECP.

The other document is entitled “An Appraisal of the perspectives of the Thessaloniki Agenda in relation to the European integration of the Western Balkans”. This Appraisal is mainly oriented to the future and tackles especially the further application and actualization of the Thessaloniki Agenda, and it constitutes the contribution of the countries of the region for an effective further promotion of this Agenda. The documents adopted in the Thessaloniki meeting will be distributed for attention of delegations.

At the meeting, we also welcomed the Republic of Moldova to the SEECP initiative, and we look forward to its future contribution to the process.

Mr. Chairman,

With the Thessaloniki meeting, Croatia took over the responsible duty of Chairman-in-Office of the process from Greece. I wish to use this opportunity to thank once again the Greek Government and our Greek colleagues for the big efforts and energy they have invested into the very successful presidency, and for the overall Greek contribution to the successful progress of the Process. Their continuous endeavours on further strengthening of the regional cooperation in South East Europe and increasing of the role of the SEECP are mostly appreciated, and will be continued by Croatia as well.

Let me briefly mention the most important challenges that lie in front of the SEECP in the forthcoming period:

- First, we need to continue to shape the SEECP as a genuine and authentic voice and role-player of our part of Europe – capable, mature and responsible to grasp the historic moment and include our part of Europe further into the new all-European political and social environment of shared democratic values, cooperation, tolerance and dialogue.
- Second, our cooperation today must also be part of our comprehensive efforts to override all remnants of the past, and in the same time part of our joint aim to accomplish lasting peace, stability and development in South East Europe.
- Thirdly, we need to enhance the operational capabilities of the SEECP and find the most appropriate institutional relations between the SEECP and the institutions of the European Union;
- Finally, we also need to continue the dialogue with our international partners with a view to evaluate, streamline and reshape the activities of other numerous initiatives and forums dealing with our part of Europe, like for instance Stability Pact for SEE.
- the European Perspective of South Eastern Europe and
- the Institutional Enhancement of the SEECP,

These are, in a nutshell, the essential elements of Croatia's platform during its presiding of the SEECP in the forthcoming important and challenging period.

The concrete areas of priority through which this is to be realized are:

- consolidation of the economic potentials of the region within the broader strategic needs of the Members and EU priorities;
- promotion of regional economic cooperation through the existing and new multilateral mechanisms in the region and by engaging the European Union and other international institutions;
- cooperation in the area of energy, infrastructure, transport and telecommunication, home and justice affairs, education and youth exchange, environment protection, culture and tourism;
- cooperation in the process of EU accession of individual Members, by sharing knowledge and experience and by mutual assistance in the institutions-building process, strengthening of the administrative capabilities, public service education and other areas;
- promotion of investment in the region by setting up thematic task forces for specific initiatives and projects aimed at economic and social rehabilitation and development, and also promoting the cooperation of the business associations and Chambers of Commerce;
- promotion of inter-parliamentary cooperation, as well as coordinating initiatives coming from NGOs, academia and other institutions; and
- promotion of cooperation among cultural institutions, and in the IT sector, including *e*-based projects.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.