

Plenary session of the fourth SEECP Parliamentary Assembly
10 June 2017, Zagreb

Address by Mrs Marija Pejčinović Burić, State Secretary
Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia

President of Croatian Parliament Jandroković,
Speakers of Parliaments,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you on behalf of His Excellency, Davor Ivo Stier, Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia at the Plenary session of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly here in Zagreb. At the outset, allow me to express my compliments to the Croatian Parliament for organizing this important session.

There is no doubt that regional cooperation in Southeast Europe has already reached such level that enables us to move forward and strengthen mutual interconnection in numerous key areas. Our aim is to build-up regional relevance and competitiveness in a way that it can be recognized in modern political surroundings.

SEECP has already proven itself as an important political forum, playing a pivotal role in further development of stability and prosperity in the countries that joined their efforts in this initiative. Furthermore, as a process dedicated to fostering mutual understanding and experience-sharing, one of its main achievements is communication and exchange of best practices and know-how among the Participants.

Republic of Croatia is committed to support SEECP political framework and shall continue to contribute in facilitating the cooperative political dialogue, fully convinced that this is the best way to achieve peace, stability and prosperity in the region.

Variety of activities on the SEECP busy agenda in the last one year period confirm the pivotal role of the process in building an ever closer cooperation throughout the entire South-East Europe. In line with Croatia's regional responsibility, we argue for more efficient use of all existent potentials of the SEECP, as well as support all activities aimed at economic and social development in the entire region. Therefore, we hold in high esteem the operational capacities that Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) provides under the political guidance of the SEECP. RCC certainly represents a successful example of a project oriented regional cooperation.

Overall, the Croatian Chairmanship-in-Office put special emphasis on chosen fields of cooperation, which we believe to correspond with interests of all Participants and need to remain on the SEECP agenda in the future. Such fields are, for example: science and education, energy and transport connectivity, as well as emergency response to challenges of illegal migration and terrorism.

Croatian Chairmanship has successfully completed both Informal Meetings of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs. First one held on 22 September 2016 in New York on the margins of the UN General Assembly, and the second one on 3 March 2017 in Zagreb, where the Joint Statement of the SEECP Ministers of Foreign Affairs was adopted. Final Meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Foreign Affairs will be held at the end of the Croatian Chairmanship of the SEECP, on 30 June 2017 in Dubrovnik, followed by the SEECP Summit on the same day.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The overall situation in the region requires concrete political decisions and streamlining of our actions. Following our common principles of strengthening democratic processes and the rule of law institutions remains the best guarantee for the region's peace and stability.

To keep this momentum, one of three panels at this year's Dubrovnik Forum titled „Adriatic-Mediterranean Cooperation and Southeast European Security“, to be held in Dubrovnik on 1 July, will be dedicated to strengthening peace, security and stability through regional, but also transregional cooperation. Over the years, the Dubrovnik Forum has, due to its quality and global topics, grown into a traditional event, gathering high officials, diplomats, intellectuals and experts from all over the world. This year's Forum will seek to explore the potential of existing and future mechanisms to enhance the cooperation between Adriatic and

South-East Mediterranean areas, between South-East Europe, Northern Africa and Middle East in all aforementioned and crucially important fields. We firmly believe it will provide a concrete contribution to fostering of the overall regional and global security and development agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we are here to once again confirm our readiness to continue and enhance our cooperation within the SEECP and I can confirm from our side that Croatia will remain a reliable and engaged partner in taking our cooperation to the next level.

Thank you for your attention.