



“Mr. Chairman,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Dear colleagues,

At the outset, let me thank our hosts for organizing this important meeting, as well as for their efforts and everything they did in the past year when Albania held Chairmanship-in-Office of the SEECP.

It is my great pleasure to be able to attend today’s meeting and to exchange views with my colleagues on the latest developments in South East Europe, with a focus on regional cooperation as the basis for the European integration processes.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The main foreign policy goal of R. Serbia remains unchanged, and that is, as before, European Union membership. In achieving this goal, Serbia has demonstrated its consistency, both through the implementation of its ambitious reform agenda and through a constructive approach in the dialogue with Pristina. On this occasion, I would like to remind you that R. Serbia has completed the screening process with flying colours, so that a year-and-a half after the opening of its EU accession negotiations, I believe that the time has come to move onto a new, more demanding phase in relations with the EU and to open the first chapters in these negotiations. Over the past year, the Government of the Republic Serbia managed to put public finances in order, cut the budget deficit, pass a number of reform laws in almost all areas, and adopted measures of fiscal consolidation creating a basis for the completion of negotiations with the International Monetary Fund and the signing of the precautionary arrangement with it. This has given extra credibility to the Government’s efforts, sending a particularly important signal to all potential investors.

I am sure that all those present here recognize that the meetings previously held in Belgrade and Pristina, in the “Western Balkans Six” format, contributed to further improve stability of the region and reaffirmed that regional cooperation and economic stability are their common vehicle for achieving European standards and meeting EU membership criteria. Furthermore, the top level meeting in Brussels on 21 April was of great importance, and in an effort to fully contribute to this process, Serbia was the first one in the region to prepare and present the Single project pipeline and established the National Investment Committee. We are ready to

share our experience concerning the establishment of these structures with other WB6 participants anytime. We discussed with our partners within the Western-Balkans format a number of infrastructure projects such as construction of the Nis-Pristina-Durres highway, on Route 7, Corridor XI and section of Route 4 which runs through Serbia from the Romanian to the Montenegrin border, i.e. the Belgrade-South Adriatic Highway. We have also highlighted the need for the reconstruction of railway lines where the Belgrade-Vrhnica-Podgorica-Durres-Vlore railway has definitely been prioritized by us.

I would like to underscore in particular the significance of last year's visit of Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama to Belgrade, which I firmly believe had a major impact not only on our bilateral relations, but also on the region of South-East Europe as a whole. Already next week, a return visit of Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic will be organized as yet another proof of the ascending line in the mutual relations and of Serbia's commitment to the further development of good-neighbourly relations and regional cooperation.

In the period ahead, Serbia will, as it has done so far, remain fully committed to European integration processes, as the best path towards ensuring safety, prosperity and lasting peace in our region. The very Informal Ministerial Meeting of SEECP Foreign Ministers that was held here in Tirana in February, and the Joint Statement on Terrorism that was adopted on the occasion, pointed to the raising of the regional awareness of the need to strengthen cooperation in combating terrorism and countering the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters (FTF).  
Ladies and gentlemen,

The EU enlargement policy is certainly one of the most significant EU tools, not only for securing stability of the region and its further economic prosperity, but also for ensuring stability and security of the whole European Union. For this reason joint action of SEECP participants is particularly important in the light of its positioning vis-à-vis EU institutions, with a view to creating a positive image of the region as a whole, and keeping the focus of EU attention on issues of regional interest. In this context, the role of the EU Member States can make a difference because they can significantly contribute towards the process of approximation and integration of the whole region into the European Union.

We will surely all agree that the SEECP has continuously reaffirmed its political relevance for the further development of the region, and its importance in promoting and enhancing democratic values, integration processes and good-neighbourly relations in the region. In order to further enhance and maintain the relevance of this initiative, it is necessary that it responds to current political developments, challenges and the state of affairs both in the region, Europe and the world at large. It is for this reason that we have set up an Ad-hoc Working Group by way of a joint decision, and tasked it with preparing specific proposals for the enhancement of SEECP activities, so that we can freely say today that this was a step in the right direction, contributing to the further strengthening of mutual trust and advancement of SEECP work.

Moreover, the Republic of Serbia highly appreciates the role of the Regional

Cooperation Council, as SEECP's extended arm when it comes to promoting interests and priorities, and implementation of project-oriented cooperation in areas of shared regional interest. We believe that regional cooperation, oriented towards tangible projects, is the best way to implement our economic and policy priorities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to take this opportunity to wish Bulgaria every success in assuming the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office.

To conclude, please allow me to point out that Serbia is open to cooperation with the new SEECP Chair, particularly having in mind that Serbia currently has the honour to hold the OSCE Chairmanship in this important period. Furthermore, we are ready to provide any assistance possible and to share experience gained during our SEECP Chairmanship in 2012.

Thank you."