



INFORMAL MEETING OF THE SEECP MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS JOINT STATEMENT

Zagreb, 3 March 2017

We, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) Participants, meeting in Zagreb on 3 March 2017, in the presence of the Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), as well as the representatives of the European Commission and the RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation,

Reiterating the importance of the SEECP as the leading political forum for regional cooperation and a factor for security, stability and prosperity in SEE,

Committed to strengthening the SEECP as a framework for cooperation, constructive dialogue in the region and good neighbourly relations,

Taking note of the priorities of the current Chairmanship-in-Office of Croatia stressing the synergy and interdependence of political, economic and security issues,

Confirming the commitment to the process of European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the SEECP Participants and reaffirming the role of the SEECP in the support of full integration of the region into the European Union,

Acknowledging the role of the RCC, as the SEECP operational arm, in strengthening regional cooperation and supporting the European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations of the SEE,

Emphasizing the importance of economic interconnectivity, as well as development of energy and transport infrastructure for economic growth and sustainable development of the SEE,

Aware that terrorism and violent extremism continue to represent significant risks to peace, security and stability, as well as to the overall economic and social prosperity and development of our societies, and recalling the 2015 Joint Statement on Terrorism and reaffirming our common positions reflected therein,

Convinced that the challenges of irregular migration require stronger cooperation between all the SEECP Participants, emphasizing the importance of the implementation of conclusions contained in the 2016 Joint Statement on Migration Challenges,

Have agreed to:

1. Reconfirm that the SEECP has significantly contributed to enhancing regional cooperation.
2. Recognize that inclusive regional cooperation is an effective instrument for the SEECP Participants in advancing their European and Euro-Atlantic integration processes.
3. Emphasize that the European perspective remains the main political goal of the SEECP Participants and all regional stakeholders. EU enlargement process is equally beneficial to the SEE region as it is to the EU. It represents a significant contribution to the European peace, security, stability and prosperity.
4. Express our conviction that the EU remains committed to the enlargement process for those candidates and potential candidates that fully meet the accession criteria, based on the principle of own merits and observing fair but strict conditionality. Special attention should be paid to achieving progress in the fields of rule of law, fundamental rights, public administration reform, good economic governance and regional cooperation.
5. Underline the role of the SEECP as a regional cooperation forum that is boosting the economic growth and connectivity of the region, as well as its role in addressing common challenges.
6. Highly appreciate RCC's work in streamlining regional cooperation towards target - oriented programmes and fully support RCC's focus on mobility, connectivity and competitiveness, along with governance, rule of law and security, over the next three years.
7. Appreciate the efforts of RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation as an important international organization in the SEE dealing with security issues, playing a leading role in the areas of confidence and security building measures, security cooperation, counter-terrorism and contributing to the Euro-Atlantic processes. We will further promote and support the activities organized by the RACVIAC with the aim to enhance the security dialogue in the SEE.
8. Reaffirm the importance of enhancing coordination and cooperation in developing energy policies of the SEECP Participants, particularly within the EU framework and with the goal to ensure successful implementation of the Energy Union.
9. Work together on the development of infrastructure and increased energy connectivity in the region, for the purpose of allowing reliable energy supplies from diverse range of suppliers at a fair price, as a precondition for economic growth and prosperity.
10. Work on removing all barriers and bottlenecks in key areas of transport infrastructure, investment, innovation and harmonizing conditions for regional transport connections, in accordance with the relevant EU framework.

11. Fully support all relevant integrated and cooperative economic initiatives aimed at sustaining economic growth, creating jobs and ensuring better quality of life for all our citizens.
12. Strongly condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations wherever and by whomever committed and reaffirm our commitment to intensify cooperation in preventing and countering terrorism, violent extremism and all other forms of organized crime.
13. Welcome the progress made by the RCC in the implementation of the SEE Regional Platform for Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism leading to Terrorism and Terrorist Fighters highlighted in the Report presented by the RCC.
14. Reiterate that a common approach based on cooperation and dialogue is required in order to address the migration challenges, underlining that the focus of the international action should be on addressing the root causes of migration.