

POMORIE DECLARATION

**OF THE 11th MEETING OF THE HEADS OF STATE AND
GOVERNMENT OF THE SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN COOPERATION
PROCESS (SEECP)**

POMORIE, 21 MAY 2008

**We, the Heads of States / Governments of the South-East European
Cooperation Process Participating countries,**

**Presidents:
and prime ministers.....
.....**

**In the presence of the special invitees of the Bulgarian SEECP
Chairmanship-in-Office**

In the attendance of the.....

At this Summit we convened and confirmed the following:

- 1. We acknowledge that regional co-operation and good neighborly relations remain one of the milestones on the way towards European and Euro-Atlantic integration and prerequisite for the consolidation of mutual trust, stability and security in South-Eastern Europe;**
- 2. We underline the leading role of the SEECP as the main political format of regional cooperation between the countries in SEE. We reiterate the common will to further develop the SEECP as an “authentic voice” and as an actor in and for the region;**
- 3. We recognize the European integration as the only way to achieve long-lasting political, social and economic stability;**

**Towards Regional Ownership – Fazing-out of Stability Pact and establishment
of Regional Co-operation Council**

- 4. We welcome the successful completion of the transformation process of the regional cooperation during the Bulgarian Chairmanship-in-Office**

marked by the final Meeting of the Regional Table of the Stability Pact for SEE and the first Meeting of the Regional Co-operation Council which took place on 27 February 2008 in Sofia;

5. In this respect we express our warm and sincere gratitude to the Stability Pact for SEE, its Special Coordinator Dr. Erhard Busek as well as the Secretariat staff for the devoted and inexhaustible work and indispensable support for the steady progress of the countries of the region towards implementing values of democracy, market economy and the rule of law;

6. We declare our firm and unequivocal support for the work of the RCC and its Secretary General Mr. Hido Bišćević and we urge him to build on the valuable legacy of the Stability Pact to achieve the defined regional priorities;

7. We approve the Annual Work Program of the RCC presented by the Secretary General (TBC);

Shared Visions and Commitments to Stable and Prosperous SEE

8. We share a common vision for the future of our region, with open and tolerant societies based on the rule of law, functioning democratic institutions and respect for universal human rights for all without distinction. We strongly condemn terrorism and all forms of violence and extremism, whatever their motives. We also reaffirm the need to vigorously combat all forms of organized crime and corruption;

9. We stress, especially in the light of the recent developments in the region, the need for enhancement of regional cooperation, conducive to overcoming the difficulties the region is facing. In this respect, despite the variety of approaches among SEECF Participating States, we remain firmly engaged in the further development of regional cooperation which is in the longstanding interests of the peoples of the SEE countries, the region as a whole and its European perspectives;

10. We shall further actively develop inter-cultural dialogue, which is vital for the promotion of mutual understanding and respect amongst our peoples. We also support the goals of the UN initiative Alliance of civilizations and undertake to examine the possibilities of their implementation on a regional basis;

Advancement towards European and Euro-Atlantic Integration

11. We are confident that the enlargement is one of the strongest instruments, which serves the strategic interests of the European Union and the applicant countries - stability, security and prevention of regional conflicts;

12. We firmly believe that the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon and its expected entry into force as of 1st of January 2009 will strengthen the potential and effectiveness of the EU and will stimulate the process of further enlargement of the EU;

13. We took note of the ongoing accession negotiations with two SEECP Participating States. We expressed hope that accession negotiations could be opened with one SEECP country provided that the key priorities identified in its Accession Partnership are met. We welcomed the progress in the Stabilization and Association Process with the signing of one Stabilization and Association Agreement and the initialing of two other SAAs. We expressed our hope that all necessary conditions will soon be fulfilled allowing for the prompt signing of the SAAs with the remaining two Participating States. We also welcomed the progress achieved in the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy and the readiness of the European Commission to start a reflection on a new agreement going beyond the current Partnership and Co-operation Agreement with one Participating State;

14. We underline that the pre-accession assistance is exceptionally important in order to assist candidate and potential candidate countries in their efforts to meet the relevant criteria and to prepare them to assume the obligations of the EU membership. We hope that the new Instrument for pre-accession assistance will provide the necessary framework for more targeted structured Community assistance in coherent manner;

15. We welcome the lasting commitment of the EU Members to integrating the countries from the WB, reconfirmed by the Conclusions of the GAERC in December 2007. We note with satisfaction the EC Communication "Western Balkans: Enhancing the European Perspective" from 5 March 2008 as an objective and balanced document, furthering the Thessaloniki Agenda and accelerating the progress of the region towards the EU. We agreed that the pace of moving closer to the EU will continue to be dependent on the individual performance and merits of each country in meeting the criteria;

16. In particular, we underline the importance of the initiatives for participation of the Western Balkan countries in Community programs and agencies, the increasing number of scholarships for students, extension of people-to-people contacts between the region and the EU and the assistance for cross-border cooperation. It is our firm belief that such an approach will make the European perspective more visible, concrete and tangible;

17. We highly assess the “green light” given by the EU to the visa dialogue with all WB countries with a view of visa liberalization. In this regard we welcome the signing and entering into force of the Readmission and Visa Facilitation Agreements and the preparation of road maps for each country to meet the necessary requirements;

18. We support NATO’s consistent and successful engagement with regional stability and its resolution to address the security challenges of today and tomorrow. Confident that Euro-Atlantic integration, based on democratic values and regional cooperation, remains necessary for lasting peace and stability in our region, we welcome NATO’s decision to invite two countries to begin accession talks. At the same time we are encouraged by Alliance’s commitment to extend invitation to another country as soon as a mutually acceptable solution to the name issue is reached. We consider the progress in developing cooperation between NATO and the PfP Participating States from the Western Balkans as a further step in advancing stability and cooperation in the region;

Bulgarian Chairmanship-in-Office

19. We appreciate the dynamic efforts of the Bulgarian Chairmanship-in-Office in the process of transformation of the regional cooperation and the successful establishment of the Regional Co-operation Council within the set timetable. We highly evaluate the events that took place within the Chairmanship which were in line with the regional priorities’ agenda and the agenda of the EU;

20. We put a particular emphasis on the Informal Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the SEECP when the Agreement between the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the governments of the other SEECP Participating States, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo on behalf of Kosovo in accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 on the Host Country Arrangements for the Secretariat of the Regional Co-operation Council was signed in Plovdiv on 14 September 2007;

21. We commend the 7th Conference of the SEECP Speakers of Parliament “Enhancing the overarching Role of Interparliamentary Cooperation” (held on 14 April 2008 in Sofia), which stressed the need for enhancement of parliamentary cooperation. We highly evaluate the signing by the Speakers of Parliaments of the SEECP of the Memorandum of Understanding on Interparliamentary Cooperation in South East Europe which serves as a basis of the parliamentary cooperation in the region and of the activities of the Regional Secretariat of Parliamentary Co-operation in South-East Europe;

22. We highly appreciate the achieved results during the high level meetings held under the Bulgarian Chairmanship-in-Office, namely: meeting of the Ministers of Justice and Home affairs; the Ministerial meeting on “Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Initiative”, the meeting of the Ministers of Defense, the meeting of the Ministers of transport, as well as the other events organized by the Bulgarian Chairmanship-in-Office. In this respect we approve the final report on the activities of the Bulgarian Chairmanship-in-Office;

Incoming Chairmanship – in Office

23. We welcome the incoming Chairmanship-in-Office of Moldova and its Priorities and Program, and decided that the next SEECP Summit will be held in Chisinau in 2009. At the same time we gladly accept the proposal of Turkey to take over the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office in 2009/2010.

Adopted in Pomorie on 21 May 2008