

Address

**by Mr. Ivaylo Kalfin, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs to the
Regional Table of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, Zagreb, 10 May 2007**

Madam Minister,

Mr. Chairman,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bulgaria would like to take the opportunity to thank the Croatian SEECP Chairmanship for hosting this Regional Table. This first meeting of the RT held back to back with the SEECP Meetings symbolizes the constructive approach and the new spirit of the cooperation in SEE. As a result, a successful work has been done during the last few months by both the Stability Pact and the SEECP participating countries in the transition process towards the establishment of the new framework of the regional cooperation in SEE.

The creation of a Regional Cooperation Council and its Secretariat is a major step forward towards increased responsibility for shaping the regional cooperation by the countries of the region. In this respect it is an opportune moment to congratulate all the parties involved for their serious commitments and for the progress achieved and especially the impetus and the personal contribution to it of the Special Coordinator Dr. Busek as well as the efforts and activities of the Croatian SEECP Chairmanship.

At the same time it is a very good sign for the future of the region that the transfer of ownership of the regional cooperation to the SEE region is taking place in the year when the fiftieth anniversary of the Rome Treaty is celebrated and the Fifth Enlargement of the European Union is completed. It is a celebration of the success of the European project for integration. The European vision becomes reality. Bulgaria's and Romania's EU membership is a part of this success.

Good neighborly relations and regional cooperation in South Eastern Europe is a part of the conditionality of the Stabilization and Association Process as one of the conditions of progress on the path towards EU integration. We are called upon to support the process of consolidating stability and creating prosperity in SEE and to add further concrete shape to the European and Euro-Atlantic perspective of the region. I would like to thank in this regard both the European Commissioner Mr. Rehn and the Special Coordinator Dr. Busek for the continuous support by the European Commission and the Stability Pact to the European future of the region, respectively for Bulgaria's accession to the EU.

I would like to express also our appreciation of the decision for choosing the Bulgarian Parliament to host the regional Secretariat for parliamentary cooperation. By taking lead

Bulgaria will be proud to contribute to the further development of the parliamentary dimension of an enhanced regional cooperation in SEE.

Your Excellencies,

Allow me to express my satisfaction with the fact that exactly in this year Bulgaria takes over the SEECP Chairmanship. It is a chance and a challenge to undertake this responsibility in the double capacity of a new EU member state and a country of the region, at a stage when strong efforts will be required to bring to closure the transformation of the regional cooperation processes in SEE and to fully set in operation the new Regional Cooperation Council.

Consolidating the stability of the region and enhancing the regional character of the cooperation in close interaction with the European Union will be the main priority of the Bulgarian SEECP Chairmanship. In this respect the Bulgarian Chairmanship will commit its efforts to the successful implementation of this fundamental structural agenda of the regional cooperation in close coordination with the SEECP participating states, the EU and other international partners.

We have always stressed the leading role of the SEECP in the future of regional cooperation in SEE. To strengthen it and to support the new RCC, which is mandated to build upon and further develop the achievements of the Stability Pact, providing the SEECP with the necessary support and operational capacity, is of a great importance for the Bulgarian SEECP Chairmanship.

We anticipate paying special attention on the implementation of the streamlining strategy for the initiatives of the Stability Pact as basis for establishment of the RCC network of sectoral initiatives.

Bulgaria as a NATO and EU member state will continue to strongly support the European and the Euro-Atlantic perspective of the countries which should be a region of peace, stability, security and neighborhood cooperation. In this context the Thessaloniki Agenda states: "The Balkans will be an integral part of a unified Europe." The support to the European and Euro-Atlantic perspective of the countries of the region and the efforts in finding an internationally legitimate solution for Kosovo will be central topics of the political discussions which will take place during the Bulgarian Chairmanship of SEECP.

We have prepared two documents regarding the forthcoming Bulgarian SEECP chairmanship: Priorities and Program, copies of which all of you could collect in the framework of the meetings in Zagreb.

To conclude, we intend to host the last meeting of the Regional Table of the Stability Pact for SEE, which will also be the inaugural meeting of the RCC, in February 2008 in Sofia, back to back with the Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the SEECP participating countries. I have started my statement with good symbols. And so I wish to end: the beginning of the SEECP started in Sofia, the new framework of the regional cooperation and its new structure – the RCC, will start again from Sofia. Let us wish ourselves success and European future for all countries in South Eastern Europe.

Thank you for your attention.