



**PLENARY SESSION OF THE FOURTH PARLIAMENTARY  
ASSEMBLY OF THE SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN COOPERATION  
PROCESS (SEECF)**

**ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE  
REGIONAL COOPERATION COUNCIL (RCC),**

**MR. GAZMEND TURDIU**

**Zagreb, 10 June 2017**

Honourable Speakers of Parliaments,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to express my gratitude to our hosts, the Croatian SEECP Chair-in-Office, for the kind invitation to participate and address this distinguished body.

The efforts invested by the SEECP Participants in the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly have made this body effective and inclusive. This body provides a framework for pursuing a higher level of parliamentary cooperation, in service to the common goals of South East Europe.

It goes without mentioning that regional cooperation should continue responding to calls for more stability and prosperity in the region. It should further inspire irreversible progress on the European and Euro-Atlantic integration path.

By looking at the regional trends in South East Europe and the expectations of our fellow citizens, one can only conclude that the pace of reforms must accelerate. And a fresh impetus must be infused in the EU accession process. Clear political support and commitment are essential for reinvigorating such ambitious and yet realistic processes.

Parliaments, as legislators, have been playing a central role in promoting and implementing reforms, notably within the framework of the national European integration agendas, as well as in increasing the efficiency of governing structures.

In this context, this forum plays an important role in supporting these processes. It remains committed to an enhanced regional cooperation and musters political support for regional actions that encourage economic development, rule of law, good governance and stability.

We, at the RCC, see a great value in participating at the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly and in keeping this body well-informed about RCC's activities that support the attainment of the common goals of the region.

The RCC will continue to support parliamentary cooperation, and offer assistance, as appropriate, to the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly and its mission.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Economic development and job-creation, stability and rule of law have been at the heart of RCC and its strategies and work programmes for the past several years. Our activities have shaped the agenda of the organisation, making it more systematic, predictable and transparent.

RCC has increasingly been keen on supporting the regional dialogue, in different regional cooperation formats, on the conditions for an integrated and connected region and on ways to reenergize the EU enlargement process.

In 2016, at year's end, the RCC has finished implementing its Strategy and Work Programme for 2014-2016. In the three-year period covered by this regional strategy, the RCC mustered and channelled political support towards the goals of the SEE 2020 Strategy - centred on boosting prosperity and job creation. A sustainable and goal-oriented regional governance and coordination architecture, consisting of the SEE 2020 Governing Board, the Programming Committee and the Monitoring Committee, oversaw policy advances under a number of SEE 2020 dimensions.

Tangible progress was made in furthering trade and investment integration, designing effective employment policies and their implementation, strengthening cooperation in education, research and innovation, as well as supporting good governance.

In the security field, steps have been made in further aligning policy at the regional and national levels. There has been a greater exchange of experiences and best practices among regional participants. Above all, a regional response to violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism and foreign terrorist fighters has emerged and increases the capacity of the region to counter emerging threats.

Furthermore, the outcomes of RCC's previous strategy for 2014-2016 have nurtured the efforts of the organization to transition to the next three-year cycle. The next three years will be about skills and mobility, connectivity and competitiveness; accompanied by a revitalized focus on public administration reform, justice, anticorruption and security cooperation in SEE.

The three flagships at the core of RCC's new SWP for 2017 - 2019 - skills and mobility, connectivity and competitiveness - is backed up by at least one political process, usually involving a binding multilateral agreement, designed to drum-up and maintain political support for reform at the national level, introduced through a regional instrument. Parliaments will have an important role in these processes, going forward.

Since the onset of the year 2017, steps have already been made under RCC's new SWP, with progress in sight in increasing the regional mobility of professionals; in the creation of a single information space and in promoting investment integration in the Western Balkans.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The RCC is preparing for its Annual Meeting, which is scheduled for 29 June back-to-back with the SEECF high-level events organized by the Croatian SEECF C-i-O in Dubrovnik. The RCC Annual Meeting is expected to endorse the Annual Report of the RCC for 2016-2017, featuring the work of the organization in the past year. It will also provide a framework for exchanging views on how to strengthen regional cooperation and energize the European integration process of SEE.

Thank you for your attention.