



PC.DEL/298/13
2 May 2013

EUROPEAN UNION

ENGLISH only

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 950
Vienna, 2 May 2013**

**EU statement in response to the Secretary General of the
Regional Cooperation Council, H.E. Goran Svilanović**

The EU warmly welcomes Secretary General Goran Svilanović back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his address.

The EU appreciates the strong focus of the Regional Cooperation Council on regional cooperation in South East Europe, a process that is regionally owned and is based on an inclusive framework that supports the European and Euro-Atlantic perspectives of the region.

The EU remains committed to a European perspective for the Western Balkans. We recognise, not least from our own history and experiences, the key role that regional cooperation plays in promoting peace, stability, and prosperity. We salute the important work of the RCC which includes assisting prospective members to achieve the criteria for accession to the EU.

The EU welcomes the excellent cooperation that exists between the RCC and the OSCE and we were pleased to see you highlight the topic of Media Freedom in particular. As many colleagues will be aware this is a top priority for the EU within the OSCE and we welcome the work being done by the RCC, together with the Representative on Freedom of the Media and OSCE field missions in the region, to develop and implement progressive media legislation in line with European and International standards. We applaud your personal commitment to advancing cooperation between the RCC and the OSCE, not least given your former role as the OSCE's Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities, and we would be interested in any ideas you may have on other possibilities for cooperation with the OSCE in pursuit of our common priorities and objectives.

We congratulate the RCC on its achievements in its first 5 years. The genesis of the RCC, which operates under the political guidance set by the South East European Cooperation Process, and its predecessor, the Stability Pact, were the tragic events of the 1990s that tore the region apart. Almost two decades on, the situation has been transformed and the process of normalisation of relations between former adversaries has made huge strides. In this regard you have rightly highlighted the important agreement reached in the EU-facilitated Belgrade Pristina dialogue on 19 April.

While the immediate challenges of the post conflict period have been addressed, new challenges to the security and stability of the region have emerged and here you have identified the consequences of the current economic and financial crisis, a challenge that is faced by all OSCE participating States. The EU supports the RCC's intention to focus on growth, job creation and EU integration in the region, as envisaged by the South East Europe 2020 strategy.

The EU notes last week's adoption of the Strategy and Work Programme 2014-2016 by the RCC Board and looks forward to seeing the South East Europe 2020 targets met by the countries of the region. We also support the RCC's plans to broaden participation with parliaments, media and civil society and we welcome that the RCC will maintain its focus on the important areas of stability, the rule of law and the fight against corruption in the coming period.

In conclusion, we would like to thank Secretary General Svilanović for his address and we wish him every success for the coming period.

The Acceding Country Croatia*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland+ and Serbia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA countries Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.