



**Speech of the Special Coordinator of the
Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe at the
Black Sea Forum
Bucharest, 5 June 2006**

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe I warmly welcome the Romanian initiative to organise this Black Sea Forum, as the initiative is quite timely and unprecedented in this format. The fact that both Romania and Bulgaria will be EU members very soon highlights the important role the countries can play in the regional context. It adds a specific dimension to the regional partnership of the European Union, even though the concrete emanation will still have to be elaborated. The Stability Pact welcomes this as an important contribution to the regional ownership process of the Pact itself, which was agreed on by the Regional Table recently in Belgrade. This strengthened role of the region will be necessary in the transition process of the Stability Pact into the Regional Cooperation Council in the course of the next 18 months; at the same time, the Regional Co-operation Council itself will of course subsequently also be able to support efforts in regional activities in the wider area. A precondition for this to be successful is to ensure that all the countries of the region and the donor community are fully on board.

For the Black Sea Forum it is an opportunity to benchmark the experiences of the Stability Pact, but also experiences in other regions such as the Nordic and Baltic Councils. Some principles for success should be kept in mind though:

1. A clear sense of purpose is required. For the Stability Pact this has been the need to stabilise the South East European region after the conflicts of the 90ies and support the countries on their path towards European integration. Considerations on the aim of regional activities in the Black Sea region will be necessary. While no perspective of EU membership exists for the region, closer links with the EU and NATO are certainly desirable. A variable European geometry would be helpful.
2. A clear focus on a limited set of thematic priorities for co-operation is of importance as well. The impact of activities will be reduced. I would like to outline some possible core objectives:
 - a) Democracy and Civil Society, not only for the governments and the administration but also as a challenge for NGOs. Education



also has an important role, considering the significant brain drain in the region. What is required for all these exercises are not only the Think Tanks which are preparing quite relevant papers on these subjects already, but also “Do Tanks” to ensure that we also see some of these ideas implemented.

- b) Security Sector: One important field of activity is border management, where the experiences of the Stability Pact and the SECI PRO Committees can be benchmarked. The World Bank financed such programmes to facilitate border crossings, which might be very useful in the Black Sea region as well. Similarly, the SECI Transborder Crime Fighting Centre in Bucharest is a good example to follow in this region. Organised crime is now working in the global dimension. Therefore fighting organised crime also has to work cross border. Maybe it is possible by GUAM and the New Democracy Movement to establish a similar centre in a very effective way.
 - c) Economic development and Infrastructure are of course also two crucial issues for regional development. Allow me to highlight the Danube, which we are trying to further develop through the Danube Cooperation Process. Energy is another issue of importance. The elaboration of the Energy Treaty was a significant step for South Eastern Europe. For investment it is necessary to look to the expertise of OECD to create an investment compact for the region. Free Trade also has to be supported, which we are now doing by developing the network of free trade agreements into a Single Free Trade Agreement. The trade relations between the countries of the region are indeed extremely important
 - d) The international financial institution should be asked to be more involved in the Black Sea region as well. EBRD has decided to go eastwards; maybe it is also possible to enlarge the Black Sea Trade and Economic Development Bank in Thessaloniki in this direction.
3. One important piece of advice at the end: Avoid duplication. There are a lot of regional initiatives; therefore it might be necessary to create a steering committee, which is working effectively to avoid duplication and ensure results.

The knowledge about the Black Sea region should be spread, not only in the region itself but also in Europe in general and in the neighbouring regions. It is necessary to underline the importance of this region. We have to look for the right partners to continue the job. We wish you all the best in our common interest of Europe and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.