

JOINT STATEMENT

WESTERN BALKAN 6 MINISTERIAL - ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE AND CONNECTIVITY

BELGRADE, 23 OCTOBER 2014

As a follow up to the Conference on the Western Balkans held in Berlin on 28 August 2014 and our meeting in New York on 23 September, we, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Ministers of Economic Affairs of the Western Balkans gathered in Belgrade on 23 October 2014 in the presence of the European Commission Vice-President for Economic and Monetary Affairs and the Euro, the European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy and the Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). They expressed appreciation for the contribution and support of the Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Our discussion focused on Economic Governance and Connectivity, and we have adopted the following Joint Statement in order to reaffirm our commitment to good neighbourly relations, regional cooperation and European integration:

1. We acknowledge our comparable social, economic and cultural characteristics which are a firm basis for regional integration and cooperation. We share similar challenges ahead that can be more effectively addressed through increased regional cooperation. Improving regional cooperation and economic stability is one of our common tools for matching European standards and fulfilling the EU accession criteria, and the process should bring clear benefits to our citizens still before accession.
2. We will cooperate based on the Non-Paper endorsed at our meeting in Kotor in July 2014 which ensures complementarity in particular with the South East Europe Cooperation Process (SEECP).
3. We express our strong commitment to the Berlin Process set in motion at the Conference on the Western Balkans held in Berlin on 28 August 2014 at the initiative of the Federal Republic of Germany.
4. The global economic crisis has underlined the need to strengthen economic governance and EU Member States now coordinate economic, structural and budgetary policies. We welcome the European Commission's new approach to economic governance, competitiveness and sustainable growth for the Western Balkans and recognise the importance of intensifying structural reforms to support the process.
5. In line with this new approach, we commit to submit every year credible National Economic Reform Programmes to the European Commission, the first ones by the end of January 2015 as a pilot exercise. These programmes will present measures to ensure macroeconomic and fiscal stability. In addition they will address a limited number of priority structural and competitiveness measures in the sectors that are most relevant

for improved competitiveness and growth. They will include clear timelines and detailed budgetary implications. We commit to engage in dialogue and monitoring of these reforms with the European Commission and the EU Member States. We note that the implementation of the RCC coordinated SEE 2020 strategy is relevant in the context of the national economic reform programmes.

6. We recognise that improving connectivity within our region as well as with the EU is a key factor for growth and jobs in the Western Balkans.
7. We noted that in the European Union, the TEN-T Guidelines define and link transport policy needs and the requirements for the infrastructure of the comprehensive and core networks, in order to promote the development of a high-quality network. The Core network links all EU capitals, main economic centres and major EU ports. The Guidelines enable a transparent decision making process and a harmonised and uniform approach in the EU. We agree to apply a similar approach for the Western Balkans. We will base our own plans on the SEETO Comprehensive networks as part of the EU TEN-T guidelines as this will extend the European Core Network to the Western Balkans, allow speeding up policy and regulatory reforms and concentrate investments on key corridors and interconnectors.
8. We count on the National Investment Committees in line with the above principles to establish single sector pipelines of priority investments, and count on the European Commission and the International Financial Institutions to support the priority investments under the Western Balkan Investment Framework.

Belgrade, 23 October 2014