



**MEETING OF THE MINISTERS OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS  
OF THE SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN COOPERATION PROCESS  
SKOPJE CHAIRPERSONSHIP-IN-OFFICE 2023-2024  
Skopje, 27 March 2024**

***Joint Statement on Enhanced Regional Cooperation, Trust-Building, and Accelerated EU Integration  
Endorsed by the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) Participants***

Gathered today on the 27th of March, 2024, in Skopje, we, the Ministers in charge of European Affairs of the Participants to the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), stand united.

Our unity is reaffirmed under the prevailing theme "Bridging Divides, Building Trust", that serves not only as a guiding principle for our meeting today, but also as the cornerstone of Skopje SEECP Chairpersonship-in-Office 2023-2024. Our focus is firmly set on enhancing regional cooperation, fostering trust-building and reconciliation, socio-economic convergence and fundamental reforms, as well as accelerating EU integration under the merit-based principle. We support the renewed momentum on enlargement, which offers EU candidates and potential EU candidates to move forward on their EU accession path.

In the spirit of this important gathering, in Skopje, we commit to delve into and address issues that are of profound significance to our shared future and the overall prosperity of the South-East European region. We acknowledge the vast potential that lies within our region, driven by a shared vision that unites us. It is the steadfast efforts in meeting the established EU criteria that will propel the non-EU SEECP Participants closer to EU membership.

We understand and emphasize the importance of nurturing and strengthening regional people-to-people connections as an indispensable step in this process. Through these connections, we can unleash the untapped economic potential of our region, fostering a sense of shared purpose and vision.

We recognize the power of intra-regional connectivity in forging personal, economic and cultural bonds among our people. These interactions, we believe, promote mutual understanding and respect, fostering dialogue, and good-neighborly relations.

We commit to promoting the free movement of people, goods, services, and capital, thereby creating an environment conducive to peace, growth and prosperity. Our endeavors will remain in line with EU values and acquis, serving as pivotal steps towards inclusion in the EU Single Market. Therefore, we openly express our commitment to the continuation of efforts in current important strategic agendas in our region: the Common Regional Market for the Western Balkans aligned with the New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, and the South East Europe 2030 Strategy aimed at bringing about sustainable development.

The SEECP participants who are EU Member States offer their firm support for the non-EU SEECP participants on their merit-based journey towards fully fledged EU membership. We, the participants of SEECP, stand united in our support for direct benefits for all partners in the region through gradual integration, allowing closer ties with the EU

Single Market already during the EU enlargement process. We also affirm our readiness to share SEECP participants' relevant knowledge, experience and expertise in advancing the EU accession process.

Our determination and commitment extend to the collaborative implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in line with the SEE 2030 Strategy. This commitment serves as a testament to our dedication to a future where our shared values of democracy, rule of law, human rights, peace, and prosperity are upheld and strengthened. We understand that the realization of these goals requires collective effort, perseverance, and a commitment to the principles, standards and values that the EU embodies.

SEECP participants will continue to pursue political engagement and projects that support the advancement of the SEE 2030 Strategy through regional cooperation formats such as SEECP, thus further contributing to the peaceful, prosperous and sustainable development of our societies. Creating the conditions for young people to integrate and live in the SEE region must become our permanent feature and commitment, as the exodus of young people impoverishes the region and hinders progress.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine remains a grave threat to European security and international peace. It is a flagrant violation of international law, including the UN Charter. We reiterate our strong support for the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, and our commitment to support Ukraine for as long as needed. We express our solidarity with Chişinău as it faces complex challenges as a consequence of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

We pledge to work together to overcome challenges, seize opportunities, and make our shared vision a reality. Let this joint statement serve as a testament to our commitment, a guide to our actions, that we can build a future where our region stands as a pillar of a united, strong, and prosperous Europe.