



**The 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe  
held in Republic of Macedonia  
November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

Ministers of Agriculture and Ministry representatives from South Eastern European countries gathered in Republic of Macedonia on 11<sup>th</sup> of November 2011 at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Working Meeting organized under the joint auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of the Republic of Macedonia and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe.

As an expressed commitment of the participating countries and based on the established institute of having an Annual Ministerial Meetings of the Ministers of Agriculture of the South Eastern Europe Countries, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations had an open discussion about the common interests of the countries in the SEE region and to reconcile differing issues and views.

**CONCLUSIONS OF 5<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE OF  
SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE**

1. We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations of the Ministries of Agriculture of the member and observer countries of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe, have gathered in the Republic of Macedonia to discuss the future course of reforms for agriculture and rural development sector in SEE region and to map the future of regional cooperation. We reaffirm our commitment to the common vision and shared regional cooperation values embodied in the Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture of South Eastern Europe convened in Dresden, 2007.

The candidate and potential candidate countries for EU membership reiterate their commitment to continue the reform processes in view of their main national political agendas to become members of the European Union. The EU member countries from the SEE region express their steadfast to regional cooperation and put forward their

willingness for support in exchange of experience and assistance in the process of EU approximation of the agriculture and rural development sector to the candidate and potential candidate EU member countries.

2. We highly appreciate the shared legislative proposal from the European Commission on the CAP 2014-2020 and future of Pre-accession assistance (IPARD). We accept the advice to closely follow the changes in the CAP and further assess the impact of this proposal to our economies. In that respect, we remain determined to further implement the necessary reforms of our agriculture and rural development sector in compliance with the Common Agriculture Policy of the European Union.
3. We welcome the results of the Agricultural Policy Forum 2011 held in Split, Republic of Croatia. The Forum addressed policy challenges in agriculture and rural development in South-Eastern Europe taking into consideration global, European and regional dimensions and stays abreast on the latest developments and proposed policies for the future EU integration. We recognize the adopted Split Agenda 2011 and the topics discussed, (Future of IPARD, CAP 2014-2020, Area Based Development and Food Security) during the Forum, as a valuable mean and guidance tool which is to be address into our national policy discussions.
4. We support the progress in merging regional cooperation and ownership, through effective use of existing SWG RRD initiatives and instruments, founded on inclusiveness, transparency and complementarity via application of area based development approach in the cross-border rural areas in SEE. We encourage these efforts and stand ready to support them, by means of emphasizing regional dialogue and cooperation among the SEE countries within the SWG network. We task the SWG Assembly to prepare relevant proposals and action plans in order to apply the area based development approach. We encourage the SWG structures to continue the dialogue with the European Commission (DG AGRI and DG ENLARG) and to develop and propose comprehensive program for the SEE region.

We welcome and are committed to support, strong and productive cooperation in all fields of agriculture and rural development including the cooperation among the Universities, academic institutions and Faculties of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe in order to increase the capacity to objectively analyze agricultural and rural development challenges and policy performance.

5. We adopt the report of the Secretary General on the achievements and results of the SWG work in year of 2011. We express our gratitude for the professionalism and dedication to the Staff of the SWG Secretariat and members of the SWG Assembly for their exceptional performance and expect that the result based performance altitude remains in the future.

6. We endorse the new Strategic and Operational Plan for the period 2011-2015 that lays out our vision for regional cooperation for the next five years within the regional initiative Standing Working Group.

The mid-term strategic plan aims to provide good scope for development of regional cooperation in the next 5 years. At the same time it is focused on the priority needs for regional agriculture and rural development, identified by the SWG Member countries.

In accordance with the detailed provisions of this Strategic and Operational Plan, we have also:

- decided to enhance our contribution to a comprehensive approach to the strategic outline of the SWG in order to effectively manage and improve the regional cooperation in the field of agriculture and rural development;
  - reiterated our statement from the Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture of South Eastern Europe in 2007 and affirm our overall political, financial and technical support to the activities in order to assure sustainability of the SWG;
  - task the Secretary General and SWG Assembly to prepare and adopt joint plan for our enhanced contribution and support the functions and operations of the SWG. The SWG should continue functioning in a more nimble, more capable and more cost-effective manner, and it should continue to serve as an essential instrument for regional cooperation in the scope of the SWG Member institutions in the SEE region;
  - task the Secretary General and the SWG Assembly to move forward the reform processes in the regional cooperation within the SWG as an International Intergovernmental Organization in all necessary areas without delay;
  - encourage the Secretary General and the acting SWG Presidency to continue to work with the European Union on the development and application of the Area Based Development in the rural cross-border areas of South Eastern Europe.
7. We agree to further enhance existing partnership and develop new ones with interested countries and organizations. In accordance with the detailed provisions of these meeting conclusions we also:
    - Welcome the observer status of Republic of Austria and its Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management;
    - Encourage other Governments from South Eastern Europe to join the regional initiative of SWG;
    - Appreciate the presence on the 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe the Ministry representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany, Republic of Hungary, Republic of Poland and Republic of Moldova;
    - Invite the present Ministries and respective Ministries of Agriculture of other EU member countries to intensify the dialogue with our regional initiative – SWG RRD and to commence contacts and develop joint cooperation programs relevant for the SEE region and Europe in general.

8. We congratulate Republic of Croatia and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development for successfully holding the Presidency of the SWG Assembly during the year 2011.

In addition, we congratulate Republic of Croatia and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development for successful completion of the negotiation process with the European Union. We hold a strong belief that Republic of Croatia in respect to regional cooperation will continue and enhance its active participation in our regional structures and as other EU member states from the region will support the aspirations of the candidate and potential candidate EU member countries in fulfilling their goal in becoming EU Members.

The SWG Presidency and the duties for the year of 2012 have been handed over from the current Presidency – the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development of Republic of Croatia to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of Republic of Macedonia.

Based on the rotation principles in handling the Presidency of the SWG, we agree that the Kosovo\* Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development will take over the role of the SWG Presidency for the year 2013.

As proposed on the Agricultural Policy Forum 2011, the Twelfth Agricultural Policy Forum in South Eastern Europe will be held in Macedonia in autumn 2012.

9. We highly appreciate the support provided by the convening organizations and institutions: German International Cooperation (GIZ), commissioned by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the European Commission - DG AGRI.
10. We express our appreciation for the kind hospitality provided by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. At this meeting in Macedonia, we have set a clear course for regional cooperation in the next five years. The SWG will remain a crucial instrument for promoting policy dialogue and regional cooperation and development in the area of agriculture and rural development in SEE. With its new Strategic and Operational Plan, the SWG will be more effective, more diligent, and proficient to address the development challenges of the rural areas in the region. We will meet again in 2012 to review the progress.

\*Under UN Security Council Resolution 1244(1999).

## Present representatives of institutions during the meeting

### SWG Members



Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection - Republic of Albania



Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations - Bosnia and Herzegovina



Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management - Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina



Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development - Republic of Croatia



Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy - Republic of Macedonia



Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development - Montenegro



Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development – Kosovo (UNSCR 1244)

### SWG Observers



Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food - Republic of Slovenia



Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry - Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina

### Other Ministries non SWG Members



Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry – Republic of Moldova



Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development - Republic of Poland



Ministry of Rural Development of Hungary - Republic of Hungary



Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection - Germany

## Other institutions



European Commission, Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development



Delegation of the European Union in the Republic of Macedonia



German International Cooperation (GIZ)



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO UN)



Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)

Universities of South Eastern European Countries