

Declaration

Of the Ministers/ Heads of Delegations responsible for agriculture and rural development in South Eastern Europe

**Convened in Kopaonik, Republic of Serbia
November 15th 2013**

The Ministers of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe (SEE) and the Heads of Delegations, members of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe which have gathered on 15th of November 2013 in Kopaonik, proclaim that the main objectives set in the 2007 Dresden Declaration have been achieved and reaffirm their determination to continue developing the regional cooperation in the field of agriculture and rural development.

The Ministers of Agriculture from SEE and the Heads of Delegations regard the integration process to the European Union (EU) as an important goal in the process of reforms of the agricultural sector and the economic transformation of the rural areas throughout SEE. The past years of intensive integration efforts and mutual cooperation within the SWG RRD opens up new opportunities and poses new challenges for our future cooperation on the issues of common interest.

The cooperation of the Ministries of Agriculture from SEE will continue to focus on regional activities and initiatives within the SWG, as a platform for networking and regional cooperation, striving at strengthening the regional partnership. In this context, the SWG will continue to act as a regional implementing agency for developing and implementing regional programs and projects.

The Declaration in Kopaonik on 15th of November 2013 of the Ministers of Agriculture and Heads of Delegations sets, in the common interest of SEE, the framework for the future cooperation in the field of agriculture and rural development.

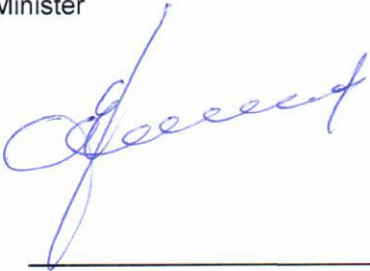
In particular:

- We reconfirm our commitment and support to the EU integration process and to continue our efforts in streamlining our national agriculture and rural development policies with the Common Agriculture Policy of the EU during the period 2014-2020. We welcome the establishment of the regional platform for cooperation among the academic institutions and the Ministries of Agriculture in order to increase the capacity to objectively analyze agricultural and rural development challenges and policy performance.
- We confirm our political support to the initiatives and activities taken to facilitate a sustainable socio-economic development in the cross-border rural areas of the SEE region. In this regard we welcome the actions undertaken by the SWG together with the European Commission (EC) to foster rural development in the SEE region through the application of the Area Based Development approach and we confirm our commitment to provide political, financial and technical support to the development and implementation of a multi-annual area based development program during the 2014-2020 period. In addition, we are ready to enlarge our cooperation in all other horizontal issues under the authority of our institutions.
- We express our appreciation of the support from the EU to rural development through the IPARD instrument in the pre-accession period. This instrument provide valuable assistance to gain experience in designing EU compatible rural development programmes and in managing EU fund as well as in introducing compliance with EU standards in the field of agriculture and food production.
In this regard, we, the Ministers from candidate and potential candidate countries for EU membership, confirm our commitment to cooperate and exchange our experiences in preparing for, and implementing the IPARD programs with a view to optimize the benefit of this instrument.

- We remain devoted to the principles of development of regional trade and free movement of goods and people for the benefit of all parties concerned, and in sharing common ideas for future development with the objective of reaching this goal.
- We confirm our willingness to further expand our cooperation with other institutions on other issues of relevance to agriculture and rural areas amongst others forestry and environmental issues to facilitate joint actions for the common good of SEE.
- We welcome and are committed to support strong and productive cooperation in all fields of agriculture and rural development including the cooperation with national and regional rural networks, academic institutions and civil society in order to increase the exchange of knowledge and best practices among rural communities in dealing with agricultural and rural development challenges.

We, the signatories stay closely committed to cooperate with the partners from the EU member states and EU institutions, other regional initiatives in South Eastern Europe and Europe as well as third countries and international organizations.

Signed by:

Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Administration, Albania H.E. Edmond Panariti Minister 	Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina H.E. Jerko Ivankovic - Lijanovic Minister 
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina On behalf of H.E. Stevo Mirjanic Minister Mr. Zoran Kovacevic Assistant Minister 	Ministry of Agriculture, Croatia H.E. Tihomir Jakovina Minister 
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Macedonia On behalf of H.E. Ljupco Dimovski Minister Mr. Besir Jasari State Secretary 	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Serbia On behalf of H.E. Dragan Glamocic Minister Mr. Danilo Golubovic State Secretary 

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Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural
Development, Kosovo*

H.E. Blerand Stavileci
Minister



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