



SPECIAL CO-ORDINATOR OF THE
STABILITY PACT
FOR SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

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PRESS RELEASE

Region Confirms Commitment to Managing Population Movements

Five countries of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEEC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding today, reaffirming the region's commitment to working together on migration, asylum and refugee issues.

Government officials from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia-Montenegro signed the document in Tirana, in a ceremony hosted by the current Albanian presidency of the MARRI Regional Forum.

"These issues affect the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in the region," commented Ambassador Janez Premoze, the Chair of Working Table III. "It is very good news that the governments have committed themselves to working together in addressing these very complex challenges."

Through this document, the governments accept regional responsibility for issues that were previously tackled in the framework of the Stability Pact's Migration, Asylum and Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI). They also agree on an institutional and operational framework for the Regional Forum and its permanent secretariat, which will be established in Skopje in October.

The transfer of this initiative to the region is in line with the European Union's recommendations under the Thessaloniki agenda of 2003. It is also in

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conformity with the Romanian SEECP Chairmanship's commitment to consolidating the SEECP as a platform for European integration, and to becoming the voice of the region.

By today, less than half of the over 2 million refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) have returned to their homes, while the need for intra-regional migration is on the increase. At an SEECP ministerial conference in April 2004, governments agreed that a new, regional approach was needed for the solution of displacement and migration challenges, and agreed to facilitate the integration of refugees and IDPs into new environments.

Attachments:

- Memorandum of Understanding
- Official press release of the Romanian Chairmanship of the SEECP

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