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Item 61 of the preliminary list*

**Maintenance of international security — good-
neighbourliness, stability and development in
South-Eastern Europe**

**Security Council
Fifty-seventh year**

**Letter dated 24 June 2002 from the Permanent Representative
of Yugoslavia to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General**

I have the honour to forward, enclosed herewith, the Joint Statement issued by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the countries of the South-East European Cooperation Process at their meeting in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, on 19 June 2002 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex distributed as a document of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, under item 61 of the preliminary list, "Maintenance of international security — good-neighbourliness, stability and development in South-Eastern Europe", and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dejan Šahović
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/57/50/Rev.1.

Annex to the letter dated 24 June 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Yugoslavia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Joint Statement of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the South-East European Cooperation Process — Belgrade, 19 June 2002

The Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Heads of delegations of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) countries — Goran Svilanović, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Arta Dade, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Zlatko Lagumdžija, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Slobodan Čašule, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mircea Geoana, Minister for Foreign Affairs, İsmail Cem, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ivan Petkov, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Demetri Dollis, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Vesna Cvjetkovic-Kurelec, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, as an observer — met in Belgrade on 19 June 2002 for the Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the SEECP countries.

The United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, Michael Steiner, the Personal Envoy of the Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, Lars Schmidt, the Special Envoy of the Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Johanna Pollmann Zaal, and Geoffrey Barrett, representative of the European Commission, attended the meeting as special guests of the SEECP Chairman-in-Office.

The Ministers reaffirmed their strong commitment to the principles contained in the Charter on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe, based on the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act and the SEECP Summit and Ministerial Declarations. They noted with great satisfaction a considerable improvement of the political situation in the region, paving the way for a more stable and secure environment. They are committed to pursuing their efforts to that end.

The Ministers reiterated their full respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the borders of the participating States. They reaffirmed their strong commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes, the rejection of the threat or use of force, and respect for international law, and welcomed the present overall efforts, including the enhancement of the role of SEECP, in strengthening regional stability as a substantive contribution to peace and security on the continent. They also referred to full respect for the high objectives of democracy, rule of law, human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, and market economy as indispensable values for greater and more fruitful cooperation among the countries of the region.

The Ministers underlined their full support for international efforts in combating all forms of terrorism, which has become the most serious threat to international peace and security. They recognized the great danger that terrorism poses to the lives and prosperity of their citizens. In that context, the Ministers placed particular emphasis on the issue of organized crime, which poses a major obstacle to democratic and reform processes in the region.

The Ministers confirmed their strong conviction that coordination and cooperation between SEECP countries and the European Union is essential for the prosperity, sustainable development and stability of the region as a whole and of all participating States. They strongly supported the acceleration of processes that will lead all countries of the region to full European Union membership. The Ministers attached special attention to the efforts of those SEECP countries whose aim is to join NATO structures.

The Ministers expressed their hope that SEECP would become a real and effective voice of all participating States in their European and Euro-Atlantic orientation. They also welcomed the joint willingness of the Stability Pact and SEECP to develop closer links. In that regard, they supported the activities of the Chairman-in-Office, as a representative of SEECP in the Informal Consultative Committee.

The Ministers concluded that SEECP, as a process initiated by the countries of the region, should concentrate on those concrete priorities and projects that could bring the region and all the participating States closer to the present European integration processes. In that regard, SEECP should become an efficient promoter of common ideas and priorities of all participating States and peoples of South-Eastern Europe, thus contributing to overall European security and cooperation.

The Ministers stressed the importance of economic cooperation for sustainable development in the region. In that context, the Ministers reconfirmed their countries' commitment to the speedy implementation of the Action Plan for regional economic cooperation, outlining the priority areas where immediate progress is possible. They reaffirmed their conviction that further liberalization of trade in the region will contribute to the development of their national economies. They welcomed the steps for implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding on Trade Liberalization and Facilitation, signed in Brussels in 2001. They urged all countries of the region to accelerate the conclusion of bilateral agreements on free trade, which will facilitate the realization of the Memorandum's provisions. They agreed that foreign investments in regional projects and a sound investment climate are of paramount importance for the Cooperation Process as a whole.

The Ministers underlined that reliable and low-cost sources of energy are essential for the rapid and sustainable economic development of the SEECP region as a whole. They expressed their support for the improved utilization of the existing production capacities, as well as for optimizing future investment. They supported regional initiatives for cooperation in the field of energy, as follows: promoting the regional energy market, upgrading electricity transmission networks and interconnection with the central European transmission network, supporting and co-financing projects to connect countries of the region with oil and gas pipeline networks, modernizing hydroelectric plants and exploring opportunities for renewable sources of energy.

The Ministers recognized the importance of the development of transport infrastructure in the region in terms of air, road, railway, maritime and inland waterways, as well as multi-modal and combined transport. They underlined the significant role of funding the existing transport sector projects, in particular those related to the development of pan-European transport corridors.

The Ministers underlined the importance of the establishment of a legal and regulatory framework that encourages and provides long-term support for investment in the field of telecommunications. They supported the cooperation programmes in the region.

The Ministers reiterated their Governments' commitment to comprehensively and decisively combating organized crime, money-laundering, illicit drug trafficking, illegal migration, traffic in arms and human beings, and corruption. To this end, the Ministers fully supported the Stability Pact Organized Crime Initiative and the Stability Pact Anti-Corruption Initiative. They reaffirmed their support for the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementary Protocols. Intensified regional cooperation in the field of law enforcement, judiciary and public order, including within SEECP, to achieve effective border controls, is necessary to attain these goals.

The Ministers expressed their concern about the plight of refugees and internally displaced persons in the region, although some progress has been noted. They reaffirmed their commitment to take all necessary steps for accelerated and full realization of the right of refugees and internally displaced persons to return, and to resolve a range of outstanding issues pending the implementation of viable and lasting solutions affecting populations, in line with the relevant international agreements and United Nations Security Council resolutions.

The Ministers underlined their conviction that the realization of the right of refugees and internally displaced persons to voluntarily return to their homes and places of origin requires close cooperation on an inter-State basis, with the ultimate goal of strengthening stability within the region.

The Ministers condemned in the strongest terms the destruction of monuments of culture and religious sites in the region. Reiterating that the richness of the cultural heritage of South-Eastern Europe lies also in its diversity, the Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to work jointly for the preservation and restoration of cultural monuments and religious sites in the region. In this respect, they deemed it necessary that a meeting of experts be held in order to prepare a special meeting of Ministers of Culture devoted to this issue. The Ministers also appreciated the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's valuable contribution.

The Ministers reaffirmed their willingness to follow up the commitment undertaken at the Tirana Ministerial Meeting (16 May 2001) to proceed with a thorough study so as to eliminate the notion of "bad neighbours" from history textbooks. They recommended that a meeting of experts take place in order to discuss the issue. They also encouraged all SEECP participating countries to take concrete steps to tackle this issue at the bilateral level by including said commitment in bilateral agreements on culture and education. The valuable work already done within the Council of Europe and the Stability Pact should be taken into account to avoid overlapping.

The Ministers approved the progress report of the Committee of Political Directors on enhancement of the Process and tasked it with continuing its work in order to present a report by the time of the next SEECP Summit.

The Ministers expressed their gratitude for the hospitality of Goran Svilanović, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, for hosting the Meeting of the Ministers for

Foreign Affairs of the participating countries of the South-East European Cooperation Process.

The Ministers recalled that the next meeting of the Heads of State or Government of the SEECP countries is to be held in Belgrade in the first quarter of 2003. They encouraged the holding of meetings to carry out the necessary work in areas of cooperation mentioned in the present document.

The Ministers agreed that the next Chairman-in-Office of SEECP, starting from the Belgrade Summit in 2003, would be Zlatko Lagumdžija, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
