

REGIONAL AND GLOBAL ORDER

THE SOUND REASONS FOR KOSOVO'S AMBITION TO EXTEND ITS REPRESENTATION IN REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

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Kosovo's membership in regional organizations is of great importance because it enhances and develops Kosovo's political, economical and social dialogue with the rest of Western Balkan countries. In addition, it promotes the fostering of bilateral cooperation with each of them.



The consolidation of its statehood should bring about Kosovo's wider participation in regional cooperation, where it is treated as an equal member among the Western Balkan Six, as well as an increased representation in regional organizations and their structures.



One of the main reasons for Kosovo's lack of membership in regional organizations remains the opposition of the government of Serbia, as a unanimous vote of current members is needed to approve new membership.

It's evident that Kosovo is represented in less regional organizations than any Western Balkan country, namely Albania, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia. It has joined 28 regional organisations and its denomination is based on the Brussels Agreement between Kosovo and Serbia in 2012. This agreement defines the fundamental basis for Kosovo's participation and representation in regional organisations, allowing it to join under a particular status of designation [asterisk and footnote].

The Agreement noted that "To this effect 'Kosovo*' is the only denomination to be used within the framework of regional cooperation. The footnote to be applied to the asterisk in para 2 above will read "This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence."/ 'Kosovo*' participates on its own account and speaks for itself at all regional meetings".

OVERVIEW OF KOSOVO'S REPRESENTATION IN REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Inclusive regional cooperation is a fundamental instrument for the Western Balkan countries' progress in the path towards EU membership. In this view, the SEE 2030 Strategy aims to offer a bright and promising future to the region, while the Berlin Process is trying to foster this European integration perspective as well as the overall cooperation between the WB6. Therefore, regional cooperation is pursuing the framework of cooperation within EU structures, including a range of regional mechanisms divided into different areas. In this respect, each regional organisation has a similar outline; a mission, a written statute, rules and procedures, as well as a secretariat, website and headquarters.

Kosovo's engagement in regional organisations highly contributes to upgrading its profile as a new regional state. To that regard, Kosovo is actively participating in their meetings and decision-making process, affirming thereby its full-fledged membership. Membership in regional organisations is of a great importance for Kosovo because it

increases and develops its political, economic and social dialogue with other WB countries, and promotes the fostering of bilateral cooperation with each. As a matter of fact, Serbia is obligated to "de facto" accept Kosovo as an equal member in regional organisations, and cooperate within their framework.

Throughout the implementation of the Brussels agreement, facilitated by the European Union, Kosovo succeeded to join various regional organisations, including political ones. As a result, its membership brought to some necessary amendments to the original statutes of organisations, specifying that the denomination of Kosovo should be marked with an asterisk and footnote in all documents of the organisations.

To avoid using the term "country", which is unacceptable for Serbia, each organisation has agreed by consensus to use other terms such as "economy" at the RCC, "participant" at MARRI and SEEC, "contracting parties" at WBF, RYCO, Berlin Process etc. Besides the specific designation of the member states, other "forbidden words" for Serbia in meetings and relevant documents are: nation, nationality and border.

However, the dialogue stalemate between Kosovo and Serbia is fully reflected on the decision-making process of regional organisations where Kosovo is a member.

To consolidate its position in regional cooperation, Kosovo aims to expand its participation in organisations like All, CEI, RAI, SELEC etc. Given the unanimous vote needed to approve new members, the goal has not been achieved so far due to Serbia's firm objection.

CHALLENGES TO KOSOVO'S CHAIRMANSHIP IN OFFICE IN REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

SEEC {South East Europe Cooperation Pact}

It was a great achievement for Kosovo to take over the Chairmanship in Office of SEEC for the period July

2019-2020. At the same time, this was an achievement for the Albanian diplomacy as well, following a successful lobbying for Kosovo. However, it did not pass without incidents. In its capacity of Chairman in office Bosnia-Herzegovina hosted the SEECP Ministerial and Summit in Sarajevo in July 2019, and according to the rules of procedures, BH should hand over the SEECP C-i-O to Kosovo. Regardless of the official protocol, BH didn't deliver official invitations to the President and Foreign Minister of Kosovo. In response to it, Kosovo did not participate in the SEECP Ministerial and Summit in Sarajevo, and therefore it didn't have the opportunity to present its priorities during its chairmanship of the organisation. However, the following SEECP Ministerial organized in the margins of the annual session of the UNGA in New York, in September 2019 served to introduce the priorities and agenda of the SEECP Kosovo C-i-O. The focus of the Kosovo Chairmanship was defined in two crucial pillars: strengthening regional cooperation and accelerating European integration process. Due to the pandemic situation, Kosovo couldn't organize all activities foreseen in the calendar, but successfully managed to organize the most important ones, thus playing a constructive and balanced role in all meetings. Unfortunately, due to lack of consensus regarding some remarks on EU issues reflected in the final declaration, for the first time in the history of SEECP, the Prishtina Declaration was not approved.

WBF {Western Balkan Fund}

Kosovo assumed the WBF Chairmanship in Office in January 2019. Its main objective was the strengthening of regional cooperation and promoting cooperation among civil societies in the region. During the Kosovo Chairmanship, the Fund drafted the Strategy for 2021-2025, organized the Second Call for projects, as well as a large number of activities aimed at strengthening regional cooperation in the field of education, culture and human exchanges. Kosovo C-i-O was successful as it managed to achieve all objectives.

RYCO {Regional Youth Cooperation Organization}

Kosovo has been playing an active role in RYCO since its establishment in 2017. It has also managed to hold the position of Deputy General Secretary - its first high-level representation in regional organization's secretariats. Furthermore, in 2019 Kosovo took over the rotating Chairmanship of RYCO, during which Serbia tried to be as disruptive as it could: it refused to send an official representative to the RYCO meeting in Pristina, claiming that the organisation's rules of procedures were not respected because the meeting was being held in a state institution and not in a private one.

Nevertheless, the Kosovo Chairmanship reached tangible results, such as the opening of local RYCO offices in all WB6 capitals, and organizing the Third Call for projects, as well as a large number of activities on strengthening regional youth cooperation.

REPRESENTATION AT THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (CEFTA)

The first CEFTA agreement was signed between the Visegrád Countries (Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia) in 1992 while Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia joined this initiative later on. Once the V4 countries and Slovenia joined EU in 2004, these founding members left the organization, while an opportunity was created for the membership of the Western Balkan countries to CEFTA. Therefore, the new CEFTA was established in 19 December 2006, including Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Western Balkan countries plus Moldova. In an effort to remove Moldova from the Russian influence, EU and US fully supported the membership of Moldova to CEFTA-2006.

Kosovo joined the organization represented by UNMIK, while Albania was the depositary country of the CEFTA-2006 Agreement.

The following EU enlargement with Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia affected CEFTA again. Now CEFTA represents a comprehensive regional free trade agreement among Kosovo (under UNMIK), Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), and Moldova, aiming to further the economic and trade cooperation between the member states, remove the trade barriers, and upgrade their markets. CEFTA is highly contributing as a driving instrument to the economic regional integration.

UNMIK, as the designated representative of Kosovo, participates and speaks on behalf of Kosovo in all the CEFTA meetings, in the meantime representatives of the Kosovo's government {mainly from the Ministry of Economy} are participating as observers in the respective meetings. Kosovo has continually opposed its own representation under the logo of UNMIK. The reason behind their claim remains the fact that Kosovo is participating as "Kosovo*" in other regional organisations according to the Brussels agreement in 2012, which makes it possible for Kosovo to participate in regional organizations, representing itself under the denomination 'Kosovo*'. In this regard, Kosovo managed to replace the UNMIK representation with the new designation in some regional initiatives such as European Common Aviation Area (ECAA) and

Energy Community, but didn't succeed in CEFTA. Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Moldova have constantly refused the Kosovo's full representation in CEFTA, thus the trade cooperation in the framework of CEFTA has faced many challenges and never achieved great results.

On the other hand, Kosovo could use the CEFTA benefits in terms of developing the trade and economic cooperation with other members. Moreover, Kosovo is exposed to a market of 22 million consumers {including Moldova}.

UNMIK now does not attend CEFTA technical level meetings, but it continues to attend the decision-making meetings (Joint Committee meetings). Kosovo has unsuccessfully tried to contest the representation to CEFTA in different meetings of the regional cooperation but the EU's position is neutral so far. To hinder the implementation of the CEFTA Agreement, Kosovo has refused to ratify the CEFTA Additional Protocol 5 on Trade and the Additional Protocol 6 on Trade in Services and also is not negotiating the Additional Protocol 7 on dispute settlement, as important additions to the Agreement.

Kosovo's representation to CEFTA still remains a big challenge. The Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) obliges Kosovo to continue to implement obligations deriving from the Central European Free Trade Agreement. CEFTA was also related to the implementation of MAP-REA, and now to the implementation of the Common Regional Market of the Berlin process. As a consequence, the unequal representation of Kosovo to CEFTA is hindering the negotiation process of the CRM. Furthermore, Kosovo's Prime Minister Albin Kurti has proposed to change the denomination of CEFTA {Central European Free Trade Agreement} to SEFTA {South-Eastern Free Trade Agreement}. Considering the fact that the founding members of CEFTA from the Central Europe are not part of the organization anymore, this proposal has a solid ground.

THE FUTURE PERSPECTIVE OF KOSOVO'S REPRESENTATION IN REGIONAL COOPERATION

Kosovo's statehood consolidation should generate increased participation of the country in regional cooperation because Kosovo deserves to be treated as equal member among WB6 and should be more represented to regional organisations. Taking into consideration the fact that other WB6 are hosting headquarters of some regional initiatives {Bosnia 8, Albania 2, North Macedonia 3 and Montenegro 1 - it will also host the Cyber Security Regional

Center}, it's definitely time for Kosovo to host a new regional organization. Kosovo should also take a leadership position {such as SG or ED position} in regional organisations, and it should increase the representation to other technical positions of the RO secretariats. In this context, Kosovo should negotiate with Serbia to reach a win-win agreement on sharing some leadership positions in the WB6 regional organisations, for example, both countries could take the positions of the ED in MARRI and WBF.

Recently, Kosovo is opposing the use of the asterisk every time Kosovo is mentioned in documents of the regional organisations. Kosovo insists that the asterisk should be mentioned only once, despite the fact that the current statutes of regional organisations do not permit it. This issue is hampering the normal functioning of decision making in these organisations. In the meantime, this proposal has been accepted in regards to the 3 agreements of the Berlin Process, where the denomination of countries is written only at the preamble while the rest of the text include the term "Contracting parties" {not the denomination of member states}. Since Serbia has accepted this designation in the Berlin Process agreements, there is a possibility to accept it in other regional organisations, making the appropriate amendments to the respective statutes. In this regard, Kosovo should apply a constructive diplomatic approach in regional cooperation in order to achieve the expected results.

Recalling the importance of the Berlin Process and its new impetus with the signing of the three mobility agreements, the EU is expecting the swift ratification by all the WB6, including Kosovo, Serbia and BiH. The European Commission's energy support package and the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans show the clear signs of EU's support and engagement in the region.

Likewise, the French-German plan {endorsed by the US} aims to improve the political environment in the region. It stating that "The parties proceed from the assumption that neither of these two can represent the other party in the international sphere or act on its behalf. Serbia will not oppose Kosovo's membership in any international organization".

If Kosovo and Serbia approve this plan, this momentum would bring a bright opportunity for Kosovo to submit its application for membership to other regional organisations such as RAI, SELEC, AII, CEI as well as to change the contested representation to CEFTA. In addition, the Russian war against Ukraine could change the position of Moldova with regards to Kosovo's representation in CEFTA.

Moldova has gained an EU candidate status and is moving towards the European integration path. In this respect, if the French-German plan succeeds, under the EU influence Moldova could be more positive and constructive to the CEFTA deliberations on Kosovo issues. As result, the success of this plan would foster the EU and US support for Kosovo's ambition to extend the regional representation beyond its current limits. Kosovo is aware that their sustained support is vital an indispensable for its future perspective.

GLOSSARY OF THE ABBREVIATIONS

UNSC- United Nation Security Council
 ICJ- International Court of Justice
 SEE Strategy- South Eastern Europe Strategy
 C-i-O- Chairmanship-in Office
 WB-Western Balkans
 WBF-Western Balkan Fund
 RYCO-Regional Youth Cooperation Office
 All-Adriatic Ionian Initiative
 RAI-Region Anti-Corruption Initiative
 SELEC-Southeast European Law Enforcement Center
 CEI-Central European Initiative
 SEECP -South East Europe Cooperation Pact
 Eney.Com- Energy Community
 e-SEE- Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
 SEETO- South East Europe Transport Observatory
 TCT- Transport Community Treaty
 SWG-RRD- Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group
 WGE- Regional Working Group on Environment
 CEFTA (BE) Central European Free Trade Agreement
 SEECEL (HR) South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning
 SEEIC South East Europe Investment Committee
 TFCS -RCC Task Force on Culture and Society
 ERI SEE -Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe
 JWGMRPQ- Joint Working Group on Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications
 MARRI- Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative
 SAWG- Social Agenda 2020 Regional Working Group
 NALAS- Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe
 RESPA- Regional School of Public Administration
 WGJ- Regional Working Group on Justice Fighting crime
 RACVIAC (HR)- Centre for Security Cooperation
 SEENSA- South East European National Security Authorities Forum
 SEESAC- South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons
 CVE-FTF- Regional Platform for Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism leading to Terrorism and Foreign Terrorist Fighters
 V4-Visegrad
 BiH-Bosnia &Herzegovina
 UNMIK-United Nation Mission in Kosovo
 SAA-Stabilisation and Association Agreement
 ED-Executive Director
 SEFTA-South-Eastern Free Trade Agreement
 RO-Regional Organisations

MEMBERSHIP OF KOSOVO IN REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

No	Regional Organisations	Kosovo
1	RCC-Regional Cooperation Council	+
	Connectivity	
2	Energy Com-Energy Community	+
3	e-SEE-Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe	+
4	SEETO- South East Europe Transport Observatory	+
5	TCT-Transport Community Treaty	+
6	SWG-RRD- Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group	+
7	WGE* Regional Working Group on Environment	+
	Competitiveness	
8	CEFTA (BE) Central European Free Trade Agreement	+
9	SEECCL (HR) South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning	+
10	SEEIC * South East Europe Investment Committee	x
11	TFCS* -RCC Task Force on Culture and Society	+
	Skills and mobility	
12	ERI SEE -Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe	x
13	JWGMRPQ*- Joint Working Group on Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications	+
14	MARRI- Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative	+
15	SAWG*- Social Agenda 2020 Regional Working Group	+
	Good Governance	
16	NALAS- Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe	+
17	ReSPA- Regional School of Public Administration	+
18	RAI- Regional Anti-corruption Initiative	x
19	WGJ*- Regional Working Group on Justice Fighting crime	+
	Fighting Crime	
20	SELEC (RO)- Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre	
	Security Cooperation	
21	RACVIAC (HR)- Centre for Security Cooperation	x
22	SEENSA*- South East European National Security Authorities Forum	+
23	SEESAC- South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons	+
24	CVE-FTF*- Regional Platform for Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism leading to Terrorism and Foreign Terrorist Fighters	+
	Political Cooperation	
25	WBF-Western Balkan Fund	+
26	RYCO-Regional Youth Cooperation Office	+
27	SEECF-South-East European Cooperation Process	+
28	Berlin process	+

Note

- Organisation under the RCC
- + =member, x=observer

HEADQUARTERS OF REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN WB6						
Regional organisation	Albania	Bosnia and Herzegovina	North Macedonia	Kosovo	Montenegro	Serbia
RCC-Regional Cooperation Council		S				
RAI- Regional Anti-corruption Initiative		S				
e-SEE		S				
SEEIC* -South East Europe Investment Committee		S				
TFCS* -RCC Task Force on Culture and Society						
JWGMRPQ*- Joint Working Group on Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications		S				
SAWG*- Social Agenda 2020 Regional Working Group		S				
SEEMIC *- South East European Military Intelligence Chiefs Forum		S				
SEENSA*- South East European National Security Authorities Forum		S				
CVE-FTF*- Regional Platform for Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism leading to Terrorism and Foreign Terrorist Fighters		S				
SEETO- South East Europe Transport Observatory						S
SEESAC- South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons						S
TCT-Treaty of Community of Transport						S
MARRI- Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative			S			
SEEHN- South Eastern Europe Health Network			S			
SWG-RRD- Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group			S			
WBF-Western Balkan Fund	S					
RYCO-Regional Youth Cooperation Office	S					
ReSPA- Regional School of Public Administration					S	

Note

- S=secretariat

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Following the implementation of the Brussels agreement facilitated by the European Union, Kosovo succeeded to join various regional organizations.



This new membership necessitated the approval of some amendments to the organizations' original statutes. However, the stalemate of the Kosovo-Serbia



dialogue is highly reflected in the decision-making process within regional organizations where Kosovo is a member.

Further information on the topic can be found here:
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