



BALKAN İLETİŞİM AĞI KONFERANSI COMMUNICATION NETWORK CONFERENCE

8TH BALKAN COMMUNICATION NETWORK CONFERENCE EDİRNE DECLARATION (DRAFT)

1. **8th Annual Conference of Balkan Communication Network - BCN**, which was established with the Constitutional Conference in 2005 in Ankara by initiative of Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs Center for Strategic Research (SAM) and participation of 23 think tanks from 11 Balkan countries, was held with the coordination of TASAM and participation of Edirne Representation of Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs on **7 November 2014** in **Edirne** with the main theme of **“Economic and Security Integration in Balkans: Opportunities and Challenges”**.

2. **“Evaluating New Developments in terms of Historical and Strategic Background”, “New Aspects and Changing Content of Security Concept”, “Importance of Economic and Cultural Activities in terms of Security”, “Process of European Union and Future of Balkans”, “Importance of NATO with regard to Balkans”, “Importance of Transatlantic and Transpacific Economic Cooperation and Investment Partnership”, “Technology Sharing, Academic and Cultural Cooperation”, “Sectoral, Financial and Strategic Deepening”, “Cooperation in Diplomacy, Cultural, Tourism, Industry, Energy, Defense and Security, Banking”, “Social, Economic and Political Developments”** topics were discussed as subthemes of the meeting.

3. BCN Coordinator Ambassador (R) Murat Bilhan and Chairman of TASAM Süleyman Şensoy informed about background of Balkan Communication Network during their opening speeches. Transforming the BCN according to changing political, economic and cultural conditions of Balkans, making it widespread and functional, and establishing information repository were discussed in the conference. Cooperation possibilities with Trakya University, which is hosting Balkan Research Institute, and opportunities that can be created by the university as a “network center” were reviewed. Sending the list of strategic thinking and research organizations of their own countries and contacted countries of representatives participant organizations to TASAM secretariat and participant organizations is asked and accepted.

4. In the conference, new emerging needs for economy, security and cooperation discussed considering Balkans’ history. Related suggestions and evaluations are summarized in this report by and large.

5. With the changing global conjuncture, significant powers started to be interested in other problematic regions and Balkans is seemed to become of secondary importance. But, Balkans still has primary importance in the eyes of EU. Thus, without creating insecurity in Balkan countries, Western Balkan countries and Eastern Balkan countries like Greece, Bulgaria and Romania are in need of establishment of cooperation and security between each other. That establishment will have positive impact on Balkan countries’ relations with economic and security based international organizations like NATO and EU. Ability to act in concert is crucial for future of the region and raising awareness of public opinion in international level.

6. When currently existing various elements (micro nationalism, economic problems, minority rights, disintegration and partition) that created conflicts and tragic events in Balkans are taken into consideration; intense cooperation in every field among Balkan countries, starting accession process and taking part in EU and NATO are crucial to prevent dangers and threats.



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- 7.** BCN, which is supportive for governments and decision makers and exercises second track diplomacy, should work on common fields and help to solve problems. Related mechanism can take part in joint works to be informed from each other.
- 8.** It will be beneficial to collect and publish articles and other written works on BCN website as a repository. Archival works with articles etc. will ease to reach strategies, plans and predictions of think tanks.
- 9.** Crisis in EU also caused problems for think tanks of the region. With works of BCN, cooperation and integration can be successful. Security and economic crisis can be cope with proceeding in economic and financial frameworks. In this sense, BCN can take significant role to develop cooperative and improvable environment.
- 10.** It is observed that successful works of think tanks of the region could not be transformed into region-wide and joint events. Hence, it is important to courage the region countries for joint events. It is also aim of “ Second Track Diplomacy”.
- 11.** “Balkanian” identity should be highlighted, but also how society identifies themselves should be taken into consideration (e.g. Some of the Balkan countries and EU countries called Balkan region as “Southeast Europe”) Political secondary integration should be established, political identity like “Balkanian” on common values of the region and political integration should be establish without ignoring EU process. That identity and solidarity vision can be a catalyzer by harmonizing them with interests of great powers.
- 12.** Cooperation among the region countries should be supported. During EU process, region countries should tighten and intensify ties among themselves. Long-term political and economic strategies should be planned.
- 13.** Being under EU umbrella is important to prevent, avoid and ease problems of the region. EU crisis has a negative effect on efforts of Balkan countries to join EU. Thus, EU accession process of Balkan countries takes more time and to be made take more time.
- 14.** Nationalism is not a real problem and barrier. The important thing is integration and transparency. Significant thing is change and transformation of society rather than political change and transformation. It needs time to create a change in the mind of society. EU is against ethnic discrimination due to its philosophy. Thus; EU does not want repetition, development and use of nationalist discourse not to foster discrimination in the region and EU also wants those thoughts to be eased and eliminated with “integration process”.
- 15.** Regional cooperation is important for EU as well as for the region. That development accelerates and breeds EU integration process. This will reduce Balkan’s burden on EU.
- 16.** Regional organizations cannot gain serious success in short term to take initiative to influence domestic and foreign policy like developed Western countries. Such organizations that are established newly need to be supported due to underdeveloped NGOs in many countries.



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17. Within all Balkan countries, there are millions of minorities and diaspora that are descended and continuous of culture from each other's. Disputes among those should be eliminated and those groups should be encouraged to become loyal citizens and compatible with the society they live. Moreover, it should be taken into consideration that they are cultural bridge with other countries due to their ethnic and religious features.

18. Potential for regional investments should be researched, according to findings investment fields should be determined. Investments should be evaluated with their quality value rather than quantity (size of investment), their function and long-term benefits should be taken into consideration.

19. Resolving Kosovo issue in Western Balkans in a peaceful and friendly atmosphere like separation of Montenegro from Serbia will be beneficial. Reaching an agreement on essential issues, implementing the signed agreements, developing bilateral relations will have a positive impact on EU process deeply.

20. There are problems in education in the region. Solution should be produced; education consultations, education attaches should be opened, education commissions should be established and textbook and historiography should be done jointly with a consensus.

21. It is desired that all Balkan countries become member of NATO. Probably, developments will be on that direction. However, even if that occurs, can Article 5 of NATO Charter protect Balkan countries in the case of external threat towards Balkans? It is hard to answer. Because, the rule of "An armed attack against one of more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against all of them" has been never used. Will it be used in the future? In this sense, for the security of region, the possibility of firm cooperation among Balkan countries should be researched (like Visegrád Group).

22. NATO and EU influence and activities in Balkans are important, but cooperation in energy - security - economy in regional internal dynamics is essential. In the case of those cooperation and mechanisms are succeeded, Balkan countries do not have to ensure their security dependent on international society or international organizations. Security cannot be pursued constantly with external dependence.

23. Designing the region as a security producer as a whole is only possible with broader cooperation. At this point, division of labor and cooperation with benefiting from internal and external resources by exchange of technology are important. Even those are not adequate to provide ideal security, ensuring security together is a must.

7 November 2014, Edirne