



**USAID**  
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**SEGURA / IP3 Partners LLC**

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

The Regional Competitiveness Initiative (RCI) invites you to USAID's working meeting about "Regional Economic Integration in Southeast Europe" to be held in Belgrade on June 14-15, 2006. This will be a unique opportunity to discuss economic integration and cooperation throughout the region that complements individual Mission strategies and more informally, to network with colleagues from several countries. This meeting will set the stage for further discussions at RCI's Annual Competitiveness Conference later this year.

As we noted in our earlier announcement, we have identified some common problems and possible approaches which were used in designing the agenda:

#### **Problems**

- Regional instability, which has its roots in the ethnic differences and geographic fragmentation;
- The negative stigma that plagues the region overall;
- Impediments, particularly at border crossings;
- The country specific structure of USAID Missions that does not encourage regional approaches to common problems.

#### **Approaches**

- Encouraging stability through more effective regional trade and commerce;
- Collaborative efforts aimed at removing border impediments, if not on a comprehensive regional basis, at least on a bilateral basis;
- A program of positive image-building (sometimes referred to as "branding");
- Transit corridors - highway, rail, water, and air - can be improved through more effective trans-national collaboration;
- Regional supply chains that integrate production and marketing more effectively in a single regional market and into the larger markets of Europe.

The purpose of our meeting is three-fold:

- 1) To share information among Missions;
- 2) To gauge the degree of interest at the USAID Mission level to seek out regional/bilateral solutions to common problems;
- 3) Prioritize the topics and approaches that Missions might want to take on collaboratively.

We suggest that each participating Mission send one or two senior staff and a representative from key economic growth projects.

Please reply directly via email to BC Serdon, the meeting organizer (register@bcserdon.com), to confirm your interest in participating and to provide details of your arrival/departure and accommodation needs.

We hope you can attend this important meeting and we look forward to seeing you in Belgrade.

Best regards.

Neal Nathanson  
Senior Competitiveness Advisor, E&E Bureau

Paul Svab  
RCI Program Manager