

**Speech by RCC Secretary General Amer Kapetanović
at the Second Annual Ministerial Meeting on the Green Agenda for the
Western Balkans
Dubrovnik, 14 October 2025**

Distinguished ministers, Excellencies, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the Second Ministerial Meeting on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans.

We have some very important work ahead of us, so thank you for recognising the significance of this moment and for joining us today.

Before I proceed with details on what lies ahead today and tomorrow, I would like you to remember four important numbers.

The first one is number two.

I mentioned it last night, but not all of you were present, and it is too important not to repeat.

Seven years ago, the Regional Cooperation Council issued a study on climate change, warning that our region would face an average temperature rise of 1.2 degrees Celsius in the near future.

That “near future” is no longer a projection, it is our present.

And it is worse than expected: average temperatures in our region have already risen by more than 2 degrees.

The same study predicted what this means for us.

For agriculture, it means lower food quality and shortages.

We read more often about food scarcity caused by long and severe droughts across our region. This is no coincidence.

For forests, it means degradation.

Last year, 11 out of 13 major European wildfires occurred in our region.

Over the past decade, wildfires have increased by 21 percent, burning close to 150,000 hectares of land.

For human health, it means an increase in deaths caused by extreme heat.

And that brings me to the second number.

The second number is 10.

According to estimates, by the end of this century, deaths caused by heat waves could rise by up to 10 percent.

Considering that our region is warming faster than the global average, you can imagine what this figure could mean for us.

The third number is 15.

Floods are becoming more frequent and more severe.

They destroy not only roads, crops, and homes, but also stability and growth.

Riverine floods are expected to cause the most significant damage to GDP in Western Balkans 6, in some cases even up to 15 percent.

The final number I'd like you to remember today is 37.

According to the World Bank, the **Western Balkans 6** will need to invest around 37 billion US dollars over the next decade to protect citizens and infrastructure from worsening climate impacts.

These numbers are not mere statistics.

They tell us that climate risks cannot be solved by reaction, but only by prevention, adaptation, and early intervention.

This is where the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans comes in.

The Green Agenda is not something that can wait for better days.

It requires action now.

Five years have passed since the Sofia Declaration that endorsed the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans.

In these five years, our cooperation has matured, moving from dialogue to delivery.

And today, as we gather in Dubrovnik to endorse the Dubrovnik Declaration, we reaffirm our shared European vision of a greener, fairer, and more resilient region.

Over the past year, the Regional Cooperation Council has worked intensively with the Western Balkans 6, the European Commission, regional and international partners to turn this Agenda from vision into implementation.

Today, I am proud to say that the region brings to Dubrovnik **a consolidated set of deliverables**, all agreed under this year's Berlin Process framework hosted by the United Kingdom and ready for endorsement.

These include:

The Revised Green Agenda Action Plan 2025-2030, which streamlines actions from 58 to 41 and ensures the region's alignment with the European Green Deal;

The WB6 Climate Adaptation Roadmap, setting a long-term vision for resilience and providing key steps toward developing a Regional Adaptation Strategy by 2026;

The Regional Action Plan on Plastic Pollution Prevention, including Marine Litter, aimed at protecting marine and riverine environments and ecosystems of the Western Balkans 6; and

The Outline of the WB6 Biodiversity Strategic Plan, laying the foundations for nature restoration and alignment with the Global Biodiversity Framework.

These are not simply documents for endorsement.

They are the outcome of thoroughly discussed and jointly shaped actions, the product of months of technical work, political coordination, and regional partnership.

Each of these deliverables shows that **regional cooperation is not a slogan, it is our most practical engine of transformation.**

The RCC is also developing the GAWB Observatory Platform, a transparent, data-driven online tool to monitor implementation, track indicators, and communicate progress with governments, partners, and the public.

It aims to turn the Green Agenda from a buzzword into visible results, strengthening accountability, trust, and alignment between donors and regional priorities.

But let's be honest.

Progress is real, but the road ahead remains difficult.

Implementation is uneven.

Financing gaps persist.

And institutional capacities differ across the Western Balkans 6.

Green transformation will not be painless.

We see it best in the example of thermal-power plants that still pollute our air, and we know this sector must evolve. Beyond the huge investments needed, there is an even greater human factor. **Coal-dependent jobs remain vital for thousands of families. Around 41,500 workers are directly employed in coal-related industries, 80 percent of them in mining.**

That is why decarbonisation must go hand in hand with a just transition, re-skilling, new opportunities, and social protection that ensures that no worker, no woman, and no community is left behind.

As the **Dubrovnik Declaration underlines, the green transition must be just, inclusive, and anchored in solidarity, guided by evidence and carefully designed policies.**

Excellencies,

Keeping the Green Agenda torch alive has not been easy.

Our region has faced overlapping crises. Energy insecurity, inflation, geopolitical tensions, each one tempting us to postpone climate priorities.

But these very challenges remind us that true resilience begins with sustainability.

And our citizens are watching.

They expect leadership, unity, and credible results.

They want clean air, safe water, modern transport, healthy food, affordable energy.

They want to see that the Green Agenda is not a plan for tomorrow, but a promise for today.

Let this meeting send a clear, united message to our citizens, our partners, and our next generation, that the Western Balkans Six are advancing together with Europe, driven by a shared ambition for a sustainable and resilient future.

Because we do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.

Let us make sure we return it in a better shape than we found it.

Thank you.