

**Opening Remarks by Mr. Costis Stambolis, Executive Director of IENE**

Mr. Granic,

Mrs. Mihajlovic,

Dear Delegates,

It gives me a great pleasure to be among you today in Zagreb to present and lead this highly topical workshop on the role of Croatia in the SE European Energy Bridge. The organisation of this event, long overdue, is part of IENE’s strategy and terms of engagement in the broader SE European region. With Croatia being the latest EU member state its role has been greatly enhanced over the last two years especially since it is located in the North-West end of what we perceive as the greater East-West energy corridor. We at IENE believe that Croatia’s role is key for the actual realisation of this energy corridor.

The organisation of today’s focused event would not have been possible without the active support, cooperation and encouragement of many local actors. More particularly and on behalf of IENE I would like to thank the Croatian Institute of Energy Hrvoje Pozar, especially its director Mr. Goran Granic and Mr. Damir Pesut, Mrs. Natasa Mihajlovic from the Ministry of Economy and Mr. Vladimir Durovic from Plinacro.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The last twelve months have seen a series of highly important developments taking place in SE Europe, the result of major investment decisions on large energy infrastructure projects which had over the last decade been in limbo, pending goal

clarification and refocusing of objectives, design evolution, project maturity, financial and political backing. These regional and intraregional mega projects such as the South Stream pipeline, the TAP - TANAP system and IAP interregional pipeline, critical gas and electricity interconnections, FSRU terminals and nuclear plants have a distinctive geopolitical flavour as they appear to a large extent to dictate energy policies at local level. At the same time Renewable Energy Sources (RES) and Energy Efficiency have made important strides as they appear capable of providing additional electricity and thermal capacity which can help decrease further the region's energy dependence and may indeed contribute to the upgrading of SE Europe's geopolitical role.

In response to the intense energy changes that are now in evidence in the broader region of SE Europe and the unfolding crisis between Russia, Ukraine and the EU and the latest turmoil in Iraq and the Middle East, the Institute of Energy for SE Europe (IENE) in co-operation with the Croatian Energy Institute Hrvoje Pozar (EIHP) decided to organise this one day workshop in Zagreb. The purpose of the workshop is to bring together high-ranking government officials, senior business executives and energy experts from Croatia, the countries of West Balkans, the wider SE European Area with the objective of exchanging information and ideas, networking and discussions on the action required in order to meet the mounting energy and environmental challenges of our region.

Today's workshop will discuss the latest developments in the electricity, oil and gas, renewable energy (RES) and energy efficiency areas. Energy security is of course central to the agenda of this high level meeting and will be reviewed in the context of

“Croatia and the SE European Energy Bridge” Workshop, October 10, 2014

achieved progress in the West Balkans towards energy market integration and latest geopolitical tensions in Eurasia and the Middle East. Concluding this short introduction I sincerely hope that you will find useful this gathering and I look forward to your presentations, interventions and your active involvement in the discussions that will follow.