

disparities between the better-off Bucharest and Transylvania and the worse-off Moldova and Southern Romania are increasingly evident.

But in many ways, Dr. Stan added, the system is working. There are signs that political officials feel accountable to those who have chosen them and act in accordance with the powers and responsibilities of their office. The legislature is no longer trying to act as a government as it did in the early 1990s, the executive stopped behaving like a debating chamber as in 1997-1998, and the head of state is less inclined to seek governmental responsibilities as in 1999. It can be hoped that the desire of an overwhelming majority of Romanians to join the European Union and NATO will extend to complying with accession requirements.

Professor of Political Science at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Dr. Lenard Cohen drew together several themes for the panel. He suggested that in Southeastern Europe we have seen a "chain" of weak and small states, most of which have declined economically compared to their position and prospects a decade ago. There is a high level of dependence on external donors. Several states are plagued by political instability or paralysis owing to the polarization of their political leaders and political parties, and most have legal systems that have yet to overcome arbitrariness and politicization. As a result of such problems, Dr. Cohen added, corruption is often rampant at levels well beyond simply those generated by routine clientelistic politics, regionally connected organized crime flourishes and in many areas human security remains highly problematic and threatened.

Still, Dr. Cohen noted, today one no longer finds the widespread violence of the early and mid-1990s. Interethnic conflict on the whole has diminished, the Balkans seem unlikely to again become a focus of big power rivalry, and the countries in the region are committed to building democracy and the development of free economies. Moreover, the process of transformation of Southeastern Europe is occurring with ample assistance from regional and international organizations utilizing a broad variety of programs to promote political pluralism and market economies.

According to Dr. Cohen, the critical lack of trust in state institutions across the Balkans suggests that the task of institution-building must be a key area on the policy agenda for the region. Southeastern Europe needs "credible leadership," especially at the highest and middle levels of the state.

Panel 2. Countries in Transition: Building an Economic Infrastructure

The objective of the second panel was to provide an assessment of the steps being undertaken to develop the economic infrastructure required to assure improved economic performance, a rising standard of living and a fertile environment for business development, both within individual countries as well as on a regional level.

Social, ethnic and political tensions have resulted in modest economic growth in Southeastern Europe, said **Dr. Dimitar Mircev, Professor at the School of Philosophy, Cyril and Metodij University in Skopje**. Dr. Mircev noted several factors that add to the instability in the region: the upcoming presidential elections in several