

CEFTA Joint Committee Meeting

Chisinau, 8 October 2008

Honourable Minister,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentleman,

I am pleased to participate in the CEFTA Joint Committee meeting and I'm honoured to address this statement on behalf of the Minister of Economy, Trade and Energy of Albania. Allow me to start by thanking our Moldavian colleagues for the excellent organization and warm hospitality.

Intensive work has been undertaken by all the countries during the Moldavian chair of CEFTA and it is our belief this valuable work needs to be intensified as we go through the implementation.

CEFTA is now a reality and we all are working to make it a successful story not just for the records but because we really believe it is in our interest to work closely and foster our cooperation and trade opportunities.

On behalf of Albanian Government I would like to reconfirm the full and strong commitment of the Republic of Albania to successfully implement CEFTA and ensure a consistent monitoring of any impediments and obstacles that may arise.

We have shown responsibility in implementing CEFTA and I would like to highlight this agreement is the best example of the will, devotion and desire of all our countries to develop together, with the same speed and pass.

Trade exchange.

I'll start by presenting some trade data for 2007 and some consideration thereof.

CEFTA represents 8,11 % of the total trade volume of Albania for 2007 and 6,7% for the first half of 2008. A positive impact has been noted on exports to CEFTA countries during 2007 where the export share reached the 15% of the total export of Albania while import 6,4% only. Trade volume increased by 38% in 2007 compared to 2006, although the increase on import is much higher than on export, 44% and 13% respectively.

The rate of preferential benefit in Albanian trade exchange with CEFTA countries during 2007 is 38,3% for imports and 40,7% in export, showing almost the same rate as 2006.

The usage of quotas is almost negligible and I would like to reconfirm the willingness of Albania to liberalize or abolish the quotas.

I would like to thank the experts for their work and dedication without repeating what they have agreed during the expert meeting I would like to address in my speech two main issues:

1. Further liberalization on agriculture products.

As already known we have agreed to consider under CEFTA the potentials for further concessions in agriculture products by may 2009. Considering the diversity of the concessions in agriculture (e.g quotas, MFN, duty free, tariff dismantling) Albania proposes a easier and more harmonized approach by having duty free on all agriculture products except for a negative list with very sensitive products for which MFN treatment is kept.

In addition, considering the commitment to have free trade area within December 2010, although disputable definition for free trade exists under

WTO, we believe that this approach is simpler for implementation and monitoring, allowing therefore outstanding liberalization in due time.

2. Removal of non tariff barriers.

Liberalizing trade without eliminating NTB provides either no result or negative impact on trade. Albania, as all other CEFTA countries considers the removal of NTB as crucial for the successful fulfilment of our goals in trade relations and commits to undertake whatever measure needed in this regard.

In addition, the GTZ funded project on removal NTB is instrumental to the objective of all the members and Albania, as the official leading country will make everything is in its power to use the expertise and funds allocated in this specific area.

By concluding, I would like to congratulate the CEFTA Secretariat for their official starting.

By supporting any other issues agreed by the experts I thank you all for your attention.