

## **CEFTA Joint Committee Meeting**

**Podgorica, 29 October 2009**

**Honourable Ministers,**

**Distinguished participants,**

**Ladies and Gentleman,**

Meeting all together is a tradition for the old and new CEFTA and I'm pleased to see all of you and share progress, but at the same time commit to invest more time, energy and spirit into CEFTA.

Let me start by thanking our Montenegrin colleagues for their commended efforts during the whole year for a smooth and successful CEFTA implementation.

Intensive work has been undertaken by all the countries during this year and very notable progress for further liberalization in agricultural products is achieved. However, all these positive results should be combined with the political efforts and initiatives to find solutions and make CEFTA work better.

Because of the economic crisis the full attention of the Albanian Government is oriented, in the worst scenarios, toward the maintenance of the current economic situation. The economic activity increased by 5.3% in these months of the second half of 2009 compared to same period of 2008 and by 1% compared to the first half of 2009.

The telecommunication and other services have shown the highest increase in 2009, respectively 18% and 16%, while, primary industries and trade are the sectors most affected by the crisis, although not for internal reasons.

Albania still remains among the few countries with economic growth during this crisis and the figures for 2009 show that this will not change. In addition

Albanian competitiveness index for 2009 improved by 3.72 points compared with 2008, ranking Albania the 96<sup>th</sup> among 133 countries.

Although very positive figures can be reported in general trade data do not support this very much.

Albanian trade volume for the first half of 2009 decreased by 36% compared with the same period of 2008, although CEFTA represents only 20.5% decrease. Trade figures of Albania with CEFTA countries show decrease in export and import; exports decreased more than imports (33% and 16% respectively). Our main importing countries are Serbia, Macedonia and Croatia and exporting countries Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro.

**Honourable participants,**

**Ladies and gentleman,**

We have only one way to overcome the economic crisis hit; strengthen our cooperation and intensify efforts to implement CEFTA provisions. We have concluded our negotiations to further liberalize trade in agriculture and we would encourage any solution with respect to the signing of the additional protocol to allow our producers benefit from the liberal approach we have under CEFTA.

In addition, reduction of NTB's is more important than ever for our trade. I would like to thank EC, GTZ and OECD for their efforts and support in this regard and as the next chair of the Subcommittee on NTB and TBT we will make every effort to transform the recommendation into concrete action and success.

I would like to commend CEFTA Secretariat for their dedicated efforts in all CEFTA activities and related issues.

By concluding, I would like to thank the Republic of Montenegro for their hospitality and the excellent organization.

