

## **CEFTA Joint Committee Meeting**

**Belgrade, 12 November 2010**

**Honourable Ministers,**

**Distinguished participants,**

**Ladies and Gentleman,**

It's a great pleasure to meet again after 1 year to discuss and share thoughts on the progress achieved so far. I believe this is a great opportunity for us to discuss on different ongoing issues and find solution acceptable and beneficial to all countries of this region.

We proudly witness the huge efforts invested this year with respect to many aspects of CEFTA agreement implementation and I'm sure we together had great achievements and progress.

Our region was challenged the last two years by the global economic crises. Albania successfully resisted this crises growing by 3.3% during 2009. We were successful in the fiscal policy reform with a firm commitment to reduce the tax burden for private sector and ease the doing business in the country. In addition, Albania pursued an efficient approach to public investments leading to the increase of the demand in services sector, alleviating as such the impact of the global economic crisis.

During the first half of 2010 the economic growth reached 2.7% and the forecast for the whole year is optimistic. Industry and transport grew by 30% and 10% respectively while construction and telecommunication registered decline for the first half of 2010.

The positive figures in the economic growth can be supported with the overall growth in trade data during the first half of 2010.

Albanian exports have considerably grown compared to imports, respectively 41% and 1%. Exports of non-agriculture products increased by 60% while the imports decreased by 2%.

These patterns are not the same for the trade within CEFTA although trade exchanges increased by 17% during the first half of 2010. Imports have increased more than export during this period, respectively 19% and 11%.

Apart from the figures we have many successful stories in the regional cooperation in different areas such as non tariff barrier to trade, public procurement, competition and state aid, among others.

A lot of progress is noted this year in the area of NTBs and TBT and I would like to thank all countries for their dedication and commitment in working together to improve trade conditions for our business community.

We have acknowledged with pleasure that during this year many obstacles reported by countries in this area have been solved but new obstacles are reported. Considering the reduction of non tariff barriers as a priority for the whole region a lot of efforts have been invested to systemize and consolidate the identification and elimination of barriers to trade. During the Albanian chair of the Subcommittee on TBT and NTBs the monitoring instrument prepared by the OECD and financed by Hungarian Government is prepared and we are confident that it will prove to be an efficient tool for our public administration and private sector in this field. Albania remains committed to continue working with the same devotion and commitment in this area.

We are proud that during 2010 the CEFTA Trade Portal has been completed and officially launched during the CEFTA week. Albania believes that the portal shows a great will to increase the transparency and improve the access to information for all interested actors. We are confident that the portal, along with other achievements, would contribute in boosting trade and improving the conditions for foreign investments.

I take this opportunity to thank all donors who contributed in this field as well as in other very delicate ongoing issues.

**Honourable Ministers,**

**Ladies and gentleman,**

The world economy is getting better. There are many lessons we have learnt and new energy is required to grow and develop.

Albania is convinced that by improving the trade conditions, increasing the transparency and opening up markets we have more chances to success. Albania remains committed to all CEFTA activities and will continue to play a constructive role in all our endeavours within CEFTA.

We believe that CEFTA would a success story if all members would play an active and constructive role in implementing current and future obligations.

I would like to thank the Republic of Serbia for its hospitality and the excellent organization. We also would like to congratulate the Republic of Serbia for their commitment and energy devoted in implementing their program of chairmanship.

By concluding, I would like to give a special thank to our CEFTA Secretariat team for their devotion, patient and professionalism in supporting us during this year.

Albania is confident that the upcoming CEFTA Chairmanship from Kosovo will be a successful one and contribute to solving the pending issues.