



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations

First Meeting of the CEFTA 2006 Joint Committee
(Ohrid, September 28, 2007)

Address of H.E. Vilim Primorac,
Deputy Minister

Dear Madam Chair,
Representative of the European Commission,
Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact,
General Secretary of the Regional Cooperation Council,
Dear colleague Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have a special pleasure and honour to address you today on behalf of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is the more so because I am witnessing an event which is in a way a crown of the hard work by all, by both the CEFTA signatories and the international community, that has been conducted over the past almost two years. We know that there have been some difficult moments and some difficult decisions, but the meeting today is the confirmation that our efforts have been warranted.

However, the efforts do not stop here. On the contrary, ahead of us lie other, maybe even bigger, challenges. When saying this, I am not only referring to the appropriate application of the provisions agreed upon, but I rather mean concentration of joint efforts towards identification and use of the instruments offered to us by this regional trade integration aimed at economic progress for all of the signatories and the region as a whole.

The wide variety of the new CEFTA, in the sense of the varying economic strengths of its signatories, their sizes, natural geographical and economic orientations, may both be its weakness or its advantage. It is upon us to do all that we can to make these be its advantages. If not, there is a risk that the agreement will only remain a number of good ideas that have never seen the light of the day.

Some of you may wonder why it is us from Bosnia and Herzegovina that are referring to this?! I can say to this, it is exactly because it is us in Bosnia and Herzegovina, more than anywhere in the region, and maybe even beyond, who have been daily facing various challenges in the solutions which there must not be losers in. These have often been, and still are, some very difficult situations. Moreover, these have been situations that our European future, and primarily the welfare of the residents of Bosnia and Herzegovina, directly depend upon.

What I mean by this? The CEFTA offers opportunities for the benefit of all and we all have to jointly work on this. The fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina has signed the Agreement, completed the ratification process and it is attending the meeting today clearly shows that in spite of all the problems, we have been strongly committed to our joint goal and that we shall not give up in the face of challenges.

It is widely known that agreements of this type also include in-country promotion processes, as well as gaining of broad support from those whom they are primarily intended for, and this is the business community. I assure you that the executive institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina may have never invested more efforts in their recent past for such purposes than is the case with the CEFTA.

Therefore, I would like to invite you once again to jointly put in our efforts and capitalize on the benefits offered by the Agreement and turn its weaknesses into its strengths.

Finally, please let me thank our hosts for their warm welcome and excellent organization.

Thank you for your attention.