



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA  
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN TRADE AND ECONOMIC  
RELATIONS

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CEFTA Deputy Ministers Meeting  
Tirana, 21 June 2012

**Address by Ms Ermina Salkičević - Dizdarević  
Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations  
of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Madam Chair,  
Esteemed heads of delegations,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to share with you Bosnia and Herzegovina's view on the achievements of CEFTA and on the challenges in front of us. We are all facing with the consequences of global economic and financial crisis and we are in different stages of struggling with its effects. In this context we are looking at all alternative solutions and trying to choose the best suitable ones. Having in mind that accession to the European Union stands as main priority for BiH, we are of the opinion that CEFTA represents the most suitable forum for all countries in the region to register progress in advancing towards the EU.

It is very well known that CEFTA Parties are currently in different stages of advancement towards the EU, (for example Croatia will become on 1 July 2013 a full Member of the EU), and the integration process is not easy. We need time, financial and human resources, coherent and comprehensive trade policies that are to be in line with the EU requirements and of course, with the WTO ones, although we are not a member yet. And, at the same time, we have to look at our own economic development objectives and growth as being one of most important. And when referring to growth we are envisaging this to be a sustainable and inclusive one that will promote a more competitive economy and will foster a high-employment economy delivering social cohesion.

If I look back, five years ago, I can say that we have started to implement CEFTA with a quite reluctant attitude. But when compare with the current situation I can say that we have made progress in meeting all the commitments and deadlines set up by the Agreement like the liberalisation of trade in goods, diagonal cumulation, opening of public procurement market, TBT and State Aid notification, the IPR review and the Non-discrimination in

Investment. Also we have found in CEFTA the adequate structures and tools to address our concerns and to find solutions. In looking to our today's agenda, I have to admit that we are continuing progressing in covering different areas of trade policy: agriculture, SPS, TBT and NTBs, customs and rules of origin, services etc. I am convinced that we will continue to register progress in creating favourable conditions for the development and diversification of trade between the Parties and for the promotion of commercial and economic co-operation in areas of common interest on the basis of equality, mutual benefit, non-discrimination and international law.

Allow me to congratulate Albania in its excellent performances in chairing the CEFTA this year and as well the CEFTA Secretariat for the continuous support.

Without entering into too much details of our work undertaken so far I would like to make some comments on the current state of play. I can see for example, notable progress in the area of TBT and NTBs, but I don't see much on creating stable and predictable conditions for investment and on harmonising investment policies. We all know that investments represent important tools for CEFTA Parties towards improvement of the investment climate in each Party and in the region as a whole. The need of investments is obvious. I don't say that we don't need to further liberalise trade in agriculture or trade in services, but we have to be realistic, to make our own homework and to identify the best trade policy tools and measures that are necessary and possible to be implemented.

We are in process of aligning our economy to the EU standards, in accordance with our own commitments undertaken in the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. At the same time, we are in the process of acceding to the WTO, meaning again transformation and adaptation. We are all leaving very challenging time and we have to prepare ourselves for facing stronger and stronger competition forces, not only from the EU side but also from the international side. I believe everywhere in CEFTA region you can find textiles and toys from China, wine from Australia or beef meat from Argentina, all at very low prices. Unfortunately, we don't have such strong supporting policies for agriculture for example, or our IT sector did not witness such a rapid development as in other countries; as a comparison, in some countries, we still have in place old Yugoslav regulations.

We are not against opening our market and liberalising trade, but we have to look at its price and of course, we cannot ignore our own economic interests.

In our opinion, one of the main priorities that can be common to all CEFTA Parties is to focus our energies towards progress in harmonising our policies with those of the EU, thus becoming closer to each other when talking about our process of accession to the EU and, at the same time, reaching deeper regional integration. Only in this way we can create the conditions for the acceleration of economic growth which will contribute to increased living standards and will show to the EU that CEFTA region is making efforts towards EU integration.

We consider that CEFTA's activities to be continued on a regular basis should be primarily related to the assessment of differences among our policies in finding common understanding for mutually accepted solutions thus saving our human and financial

resources, to the increase of transparency through the notification process and the CEFTA trade portal and to continue sharing experiences and intensify cooperation in the customs area. .

Bosnia and Herzegovina has made significant efforts to successfully chair the Subcommittee on customs and rules of origin so far and we are looking forward to take even more responsibilities and actions in the following period. At the same time, Bosnia and Herzegovina is committed to take all necessary steps to show its readiness and ability to take responsibility and act in line with international obligations.

To conclude, let me thank our hosts for their hospitality and excellent organisation of the meeting.

Wishing successful work today I am greeting you once again.

Thank you.