

**Valon Saraqini, Minister of Economy of Republic of Macedonia**

**6-th Meeting of the Joint Committee of CEFTA – Tirana**

**“Trade and investments, core components of the integrated economic growth in the CEFTA Region”**

**Respected Chair, Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Hadzinasto,**

**Your Excellencies,**

**Respected friends,**

Allow me to express my gratitude to the host of Republic of Albania, as Chair of CEFTA this year, for the successful organization of today’s meeting and numerous events within the CEFTA Programme during its Chairmanship.

We are all aware of various aspects of the regional cooperation within CEFTA Agreement, whereat the influence of the economic crisis on our economies has contributed to consider our strong commitment and position even greater opportunity to strengthen it. In that respect, today we should propose concrete conditions and activities for more intensive economic cooperation that will contribute to increase the economic growth in the region.

CEFTA Parties this year actively worked on the challenges and obligations that arise from the Chairmanship Program., as well the accession negotiations that most of us have within the Stabilization and Association Agreements with EU. In addition, there is complementarity among the priorities of the CEFTA Chairmanship Programme in which significant place has the influence on investments promotion of the regional trade.

The Government of Republic of Macedonia every year undertakes numerous economic measures for improvement of the business climate in the country. According to the latest Report “Doing Business” of the World Bank for 2012/13, Republic of Macedonia is ranked on the **23-th place** of total of 185 countries and is the **fifth reformer**.

The trade of Republic of Macedonia in the region participates with 16,3% during the eight months of 2012. The Macedonian total export is 24, 3% and total import from the CEFTA Parties is 11, 4% of the total trade in export and import.

For realization of the economic integrated growth in the region we need to continue with joint and synchronized efforts to create fair and transparent conditions in trade with goods and services. In the period that follows, pursuant to the benefits from CEFTA, with support from OECD, World Bank, GIZ and other international organizations, we need to reaffirm our efforts for defining of the aspects for monitoring and elimination of the non tarrif barriers that in the majority of cases are of an administrative character.

Namely, the Project on Multilateral Monitoring Framework on Eliminating Non-tariff Barriers to Trade, for trade logistics and market surveillance, focuses on barriers and gives recommendations with purpose jointly to provide trade without limits and without potential barriers.

The CEFTA Trade Portal is a convenient tool for the region, whereas the business community in transparent manner can be acquainted with all formalities, regulations and rules in trading across the region. The regular updating and upgrading of the content of this website contributes for the realization of the CEFTA priorities.

CEFTA presents example for the corresponding role of diagonal cumulation of origin in the region, including EU countries, EFTA States and Turkey. The identification of means for further research of application of diagonal cumulation of origin, that is, development of the process of revision of the Pan-Euro-Mediterranean rules of origin by the CEFTA members, presents significant progress in exchange of experience and policies due to the processes of the regional trade. Republic of Macedonia in May 2012 has ratified the Regional Convention for Pan-Euro-Mediterranean cumulation of goods origin.

It is important to extend the assessments of readiness of the CEFTA Parties to start negotiations in liberalization of trade in services next year. Following the common interest of the Parties for negotiations in the priority sectors, the retention of the possibility for multilateral or bilateral negotiations for specific sectors and subsectors is of exceptional significance for the Republic of Macedonia.

Republic of Macedonia will chair two Sub-Committees next year: Sub-Committee for TBT and NTBs and the Sub-Committee on Customs and Rules of Origin. It will be a pleasure within these two Sub-Committees to discuss the topics that will have positive influence on the trade upgrading and creation of resourceful and favorable ambience for attraction of regional foreign investments. The investments from the region in the Republic of Macedonia during the last two years are not significant; the share is 2, 8% in 2011 and 3, 15% during the first half of 2012 from the total amount of foreign investments. The Ministerial Conclusions, the two Decisions and the Recommendation that we should adopt today, are part of our common strategies that will help us in that aspiration and successful implementation. In that respect, we need to oblige that we will follow the set of goals on regional and national level.

At the end, I would like to wish success to the Republic of Croatia that will join the EU on 1 July 2013 and to emphasize that we'll continue with the same positive pace to follow the path we have set out within the CEFTA Agreement.

Thank you.