

CEFTA Joint Committee, Podgorica, Montenegro, December 9th, 2016

**Mr. Blerim Zlatku, State Advisor, Ministry
of Economy of Republic of Macedonia**

**"Expansion of CEFTA – Additional Protocols on Trade Facilitation and
Services"**

**Your Excellencies,
Respected friends,**

In 2016, we participated in many different aspects of the regional cooperation where the activities for trade facilitation and negotiation in services gave a notable contribution. Therefore, I consider that on today's session we need to emphasize the achieved results in these fields and to propose further activities for implementing more intensive economic cooperation that will contribute for increase of the economic growth in the region.

CEFTA countries this year actively work on the challenges and obligations that arise from the Program for Implementation of the CEFTA Agreement, as well as, the accession negotiations that we all have within the frames of the Stabilization and Association Agreements with EU.

We contributed to the legal basis of regional economic area which will be the CEFTA Agreement extended by Additional Protocols on Trade Facilitation and on Trade in Services, and are moving towards strengthened , more efficient and effective dispute settlement procedures. Regional economic area shall be part of the Pan-Europe Mediterranean Cumulation zone in equal footing as other countries in the Zone. With this our Region will be transformed in the area in which goods, services, investments, and skilled people move freely without tariffs, quotas or other unnecessary barriers, where trade is facilitated higher than it was done in WTO , aiming at recognition of all documents, procedures, and programmes related to trade once EU alignment by one or more Western Balkan countries is reached.

Today we have completed final draft of the Additional Protocol to CEFTA Agreement. It will provide transparent tools for eliminating risks and markets

approach without obstacles . The development and implementation of SEED+ will support Additional Protocol with providing regular exchange of transport and other data and simplification of procedures by customs bodies and inspections.

Also the importance of this document is that it is part of Vienna Summit Soft Measures Management Plan within the Establishment of competitive, reliable and safe transport system . At the same time, its signing of this document is under short-term Regional Actions 2016 goals and later implementation under medium term Regional Actions 2020 Goals. Numerous stakeholders like CEFTA Parties, CEFTA Trade Facilitation Committee, and the European Commission were involved. We are glad that for realization of economic integrated growth in the region, we contributed this year with continuing of our joint efforts to create fair and transparent conditions in the trade with goods and services.

Progress made in the implementation of the Additional Protocol on Trade in Services will be reported at the next Summit of Western Balkans. We expect that this Regional protocol will achieve progressive liberalization of the trade with services and common opening of the services markets within the EU integration process. In Republic of Macedonia we established and are functioning intra-ministerial working group for trade in services. We defined the positions for negotiations according the sensitivity of the sectors, taken obligations within membership in WTO and policies and development plans of the country. We are glad that in the most of sectors we achieved great liberalization with no or minimal market limitations. The sectors which were sensitive for the moment we believe we will open in the future. In meantime I hope we will start to negotiate the mutual recognition of professional qualifications agreement.

Republic of Macedonia ten years actively participate in the working bodies of CEFTA and gives its contribution in realization of the common goals and projects. We consider the enormous importance of the regional cooperation having in mind the increasing of the total volume of the trade exchange and greater level of the trade integration and economic cooperation within the region and European Union. Republic of Macedonia appreciates the level of trade exchange with CEFTA countries which is about 11 % in the total trade exchange with the world.

I would like to point also that CEFTA activities are integral part of the more domestic and strategic documents among them, national Program for adopting of European Law- Chapter 30 External Relations. The activities in this chapter have a goal achieving high level of trade interaction between Republic of Macedonia, Western Balkan countries and European Union. Regional cooperation within CEFTA is an important part of the Integrated Growth Pillar from the Strategy of South East Europe 2020. Beside the current activities within the Regional Cooperation Council for promoting the regional trade, and creation of non

discriminatory, transparent and predictable policies, the Additional protocol for trade in Services is a part of the program for Economic Reforms 2016-2018 of the Republic of Macedonia.

The Ministerial conclusions and both decisions that all of us are to adopt today, are the part of the common strategies in these fields that will help us for their successful implementation. Due to this, we all need to follow and oblige the set goals on regional and national level.

Herewith I would like to thank to the foreign donors for creating better conditions with their project sources for facilitating the negotiation process for the Additional Protocol 5 and negotiation rounds for the facilitating trade in services.

In this section joined World bank, USAID, IFC, OECD, GIZ and UNCTAD efforts realized significant administrative training and other support of main negotiators on both documents. I hope their contribution will be also present next year in the implementation process of these activities.

At the end I would like to express gratitude to the host Montenegro, this year's Chairmanship of CEFTA, for the successful organization of today's Ministerial Meeting, as well as for the numerous events within the frames of CEFTA in the period of its presidency.

I would also wish successful implementation of CEFTA Program and activities during the Serbian Chairmanship with CEFTA in 2017.

Thank you