

FIFTH JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING

23 November 2011
Paris, France

Ministerial Conclusions

WE, Ministers and authorised representatives strongly affirm our commitment to achieve the main objectives of the Agreement on Amendment of and Accession to the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) in particular the expansion of intraregional trade, strengthening and deepening cooperation in all fields of our work and better benchmarking of the region in the wider trade environment.

WE are delighted to note the entering into force of the Additional Protocol and Annex 10 to the Agreement on further liberalisation of trade in agricultural products and recognise its long term benefits on the increased volumes of trade within the region, but also on providing a framework for better placing the harmonised and integrated region in a global agricultural market.

PERCEIVING CEFTA as a genuine regional forum for all trade related discussions, we appreciate the engaged efforts of the Parties in overcoming trade disputes in the recent period and acknowledge their successful resolution.

WE encourage work on broadening the cooperation and exploring the possibilities for gradual liberalisation in trade in services, thus harnessing the new sources and engines of growth and competitiveness in the region.

WE reaffirm our commitment taken under Article 38, paragraph 2 to continue to ensure an adequate and effective implementation of the obligations in the area of protection of intellectual property rights arising from the conventions listed in Annex 7 of the CEFTA Agreement and welcome the accession of the eligible Parties to the existing conventions as presented in the attached Chair in Office's report.

ACKNOWLEDGING and building on the work progressed through the three subcommittees and two working groups as presented in attached reports of the distinguished chairs,

WE further commit to work on a common framework of actions:

Following the signing and ratification of the Additional Protocol and Annex 10 to the Agreement, we undertake to report on implementation and on the economic impact of the further liberalisation of trade in agricultural products by the sixth CEFTA Joint Committee Meeting in 2012;

Underling the positive impact of trade in services on the overall economic performance and especially on competitiveness we commit to intensify the existing cooperation and regional coordination in this area, to identify the most distorting services trade barriers and find ways to overcome them while in parallel elaborating on the paths towards the future negotiation on liberalisation; to achieve these goals we instruct the Working Group on Trade in Services to pursue with the implementation of the agreed activities from the Action Plan 2011-2012;

Acknowledging that setting up the joint framework for ex-ante elimination of the NTBs will lead to the more transparent, rapid and effective removal of identified barriers that hamper intraregional trade, we urge all CEFTA structures to join their forces in timely implementation of the Multilateral Monitoring Framework. We recommend the Chairs of the respective subcommittees to take into consideration the recommendations from the OECD first assessment cycle when preparing their respective work programmes for the next year. The special attention should be given to the more elaborated assessment in the area of sanitary and phytosanitary measures and administrative barriers while it is also expected that the further NTBs analysis should be extended to cover the final goods.

Taking into account the commitments we made in the Article 12 paragraph 3 of the Agreement, we encourage all Parties to engage additional efforts to create conditions for concluding the suitable agreements on mutual recognition in the SPS field thus facilitating the unrestrictive flow of traded products and contributing to the better integration of the region.

Recognizing the significance of the unified and systematic approach towards eliminating the unnecessary technical barriers to trade and building on the successful examples of the recently reached agreements among certain CEFTA Parties, we commit to enhance and deepen cooperation among the national accreditation bodies thus creating favourable environment for concluding the agreements on the mutual recognition of conformity assessment procedures in accordance with the Article 13 paragraph 4.

Fully supporting the permanent information sharing and building on the positive feedback from the wider circle of users we undertake to conclude the Memorandum of Understanding on Maintaining and Updating the CEFTA Trade Portal by September 2012 and thus enable its smooth transfer from the GIZ managed to the CEFTA Parties managed portal.

Recognizing the importance of simplifying customs procedures and reducing, as far as possible, the formalities imposed on trade with a view to facilitating intraregional trade further, we encourage all Parties to exchange data between their customs authorities and between their customs authorities and other governmental agencies, and to utilize the usage of data to be exchanged for the purpose of facilitating legitimate trade without hampering the deterrence of security and safety controls at the border.

Acknowledging the provision stated in the last paragraph of Article 3 of Annex 4, we recommend CEFTA Parties to employ a matrix in the format suggested by the Secretariat to provide each other and the Joint Committee with the details of the Agreements, including their dates of entry into force, and their corresponding rules of origin which are applied with the European Community, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland (including Liechtenstein) and Turkey.

Having regard to our commitment stipulated by Article 21 paragraph 7, we emphasize the importance of reporting state aid schemes by CEFTA Parties in the format as decided during this meeting to ensure transparency in that area.

We encourage the interested CEFTA Parties to ratify pan-Euro-Mediterranean Convention as soon as possible and after that to start with the process of amending the CEFTA Protocol on rules of origin.

Notwithstanding the process of ratification of the PEM Convention, we appreciate the progress reached in the level of discussions for revising the protocol on rules of origin of the pan-Euro-Mediterranean Convention, and encourage all CEFTA Parties to participate constructively in the revision exercise.

WE welcome Croatia's conclusion of negotiations with the European Union and, taking into account the target day for Croatia's accession, i.e. 1 July 2013, we invite Parties to start timely preparations on a smooth transfer of depositary responsibility as well as on subsequent budgetary adjustments of the financing of the Secretariat.

WE adopt:

- Ministerial Decision on Notification of State Aid Schemes according to Article 21

In the presence of representatives:

Republic of Albania

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Republic of Croatia

Republic of Macedonia

Republic of Moldova

Montenegro

Republic of Serbia

The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo on behalf of Kosovo in accordance with United Nation Security Council Resolution 1244

In Paris, 23 November 2011