

SIXTH JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING

08 November 2012
Tirana, Albania

Ministerial Conclusions

WE, the Ministers and authorised representatives reconfirm our strong commitment to sustain the successful implementation of the Agreement on Amendment of and Accession to the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA 2006) and reaffirm our willingness to deepen our efforts and cooperation in the areas of liberalisation of trade in services, elimination of non-tariff barriers to trade, facilitation of the regional trade, and improving transparency in trade related issues and promotion of investment friendly environment.

WE welcome the initiative of the South East Europe Investment Committee to agree on key indicators for the regional economic growth to be accomplished by 2020, and emphasize the importance of trade policy, as a core component to achieving economic growth in an integrated and inclusive manner.

Perceiving CEFTA as a genuine regional forum for all trade related discussions, we support active involvement of the CEFTA Structures and their cooperation with other regional actors and with the European Commission in relevant regional programmes and initiatives.

As an important model of regional cooperation in trade, we welcome constructive efforts of the Parties in finding amicable resolutions to the trade disputes through employing the consultation mechanisms as defined by the Agreement.

We reiterate that the Parties should refrain from introducing new quantitative restrictions or non tariff barriers in their mutual trade. Since recently we are witnessing that Parties have resorted to various protective measures or adopted regulations which created trade distortions, we are reiterating that the priority should be given to those measures which least disturb the functioning of the Agreement in conformity with CEFTA and WTO rules and principles.

WE are pleased to note that the Parties have initiated to assure transparency in state aid schemes through reporting those schemes as required by Decision No. 1/2011.

ACKNOWLEDGING the wide-ranging progress achieved by the three subcommittees and two working groups through inclusive efforts of all Parties as proven by the attached reports of their distinguished Chairs,

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

Acknowledging the positive effects of the liberalisation of the trade in agricultural products done in 2012, we commit to continue monitoring the impact of such a liberalisation on our economies and to consider removing the remaining tariffs and quotas thus contributing to the creation of a free regional agricultural market.

Underscoring the importance of transparency in ensuring the unrestricted access to the regional market, we heartily welcome the creation of the CEFTA SPS Database and request from members of the Subcommittee on Agriculture and SPS to take necessary actions in order to secure its proper functioning.

Recognizing the readiness for mutual opening of services markets, we expect to start the negotiations on liberalization of trade in services in the beginning of 2013. The scope of liberalization will be in compliance with the GATS Article V. The negotiations will be conducted at the multilateral level in priority sectors of interest to the Parties, while reserving the possibility to negotiate plurilaterally and or bilaterally on specific sectors and subsectors, in particular mutual recognition agreements on professional qualifications. The objective is to endorse text of the Agreement/Additional Protocol by the 7th Joint Committee meeting; we take note that the Republic of Croatia, while fully supporting the process, is not in a position to participate actively in negotiations following its upcoming accession to the European Union.

Striving to achieve free trade without barriers, we undertake to implement the recommendations of the Multilateral Monitoring Framework on Eliminating Non-tariff Barriers to Trade and commit ourselves to refrain from introducing the new ones. Following the expressed interest in easing access of the industrial products to each other's market, we strongly support the efforts of the Working Group on TBT on concluding the relevant agreements among CEFTA Parties on conformity assessment issues and recommend that they should be finalised in a timely manner. We note with satisfaction that Macedonia and Serbia became signatories of the European Accreditation Multilateral Agreement in the fields of accreditation, testing, inspection and certification of products.

Recognising the need to prioritise our regional efforts in facilitating trade without hampering the deterrence of security and safety controls at the border and for the sake of achieving concrete and measurable positive impacts on our economies in the short term, we emphasize critical importance of strengthening risk management, particularly in customs due to its leading role thereof but also in other border agencies.

Acknowledging the importance of simplifying customs procedures in reducing the formalities imposed on trade, and the advanced level of administrative cooperation achieved between Customs Authorities, we encourage all Parties to reaffirm the leading role of Customs Authorities in trade facilitation efforts at the national level and in CEFTA and to support them for taking their such roles more effectively.

Taking into account that the Parties have already reached an agreement on maintenance and up-dating of the CEFTA Trade Portal beyond 2012, we recommend that a system to address editorial and potential up-grade related issues is established in 2013.

PERCEIVING significance of the facilitating role that diagonal cumulation of origin may act in promoting trade and attracting investment for the Region, we recommend all Parties to identify the means for further exploiting the implementation of diagonal cumulation of origin within CEFTA, to accelerate adoption and ratification of the Pan-Euro Mediterranean Convention, and to immediately commence the necessary procedure to modify the CEFTA Protocol on rules of origin and other relevant bi-lateral protocols of origin with a view to merging the variable cumulation zones under the Convention.

Acknowledging the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union and withdrawal from the Agreement on 1 July 2013, we recognize its constructive contribution to the successful implementation of the Agreement and are confident that Croatia will remain important partner to the Parties.

WE highly appreciate the initiative of the Republic of Albania to take over the responsibility of depositary, and the initiative of the Republic of Macedonia to engage in the chairmanship of two sub-committees subsequent to the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union.

WE adopt:

- Ministerial Decision on Establishment of the Working Group on Customs Risk Management
- Ministerial Decision on the Implementation of Article 52 of the Central European Free Trade Agreement after the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union
- Ministerial Recommendation on Recognition of Test Report of the CABs

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 Tirana, 08 November 2012