

**CEFTA 2006**

**1<sup>st</sup> JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Ohrid**

**Republic of Macedonia**

**28 September 2007**

**Ministerial Statement**

Ministers,

REPRESENTING the Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia, the Republic of Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, the Republic of Montenegro, the Republic of Serbia and the Special Representative of the Secretary General, United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo on behalf of Kosovo, in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244, meeting at the invitation of the Minister of Economy of the Republic of Macedonia;

RECOGNISE that the entry into force for all Signatory Parties of the Agreement on the Amendment of and Accession to the Central European Free Trade Agreement, (CEFTA 2006), done in Bucharest on 19 December 2006 (hereinafter called "the Agreement"), is a major economic and political achievement for the region and look forward to the benefits it will bring to all Parties;

NOTE the importance of regional co-operation as an integral component of the European Union's relations with the region and that the future of the Western Balkan countries lies in the European Union, with membership as the ultimate goal in conformity with the Thessaloniki Declaration of June 2003;

APPRECIATE the strong political, technical and financial support from the European Union for this process;

RECALL that CEFTA has contributed in the past to prepare members for accession to the European Union;

AGREE that this first meeting of the Joint Committee of CEFTA 2006 inaugurates a new era in our relations with each other, with our neighbours in Europe and with the multilateral trading system;

REAFFIRM the commitment of all Parties fully to implement the Agreement.

To this end, we have today taken a number of important decisions and steps to facilitate the efficient and effective implementation of the Agreement.

These include:

- adoption of Rules of Procedure for the Joint Committee;
- establishment of three Sub-Committees to advance work in the areas of (i) Agriculture including Sanitary and Phytosanitary Issues (ii) Customs and Rules of Origin and (iii) Technical Barriers to Trade and Non-Tariff Barriers respectively;
- adoption of the Mandate of the Secretariat; and
- establishment of a Selection Committee for the Recruitment of Staff to the CEFTA Secretariat.
- launch of a procedure to establish a List of Mediators;

We Ministers,

INSTRUCT our competent Ministries to execute these decisions and steps as soon as possible;

STRESS the importance of co-operating with the regional and international business communities to ensure proper implementation of the Agreement and to this end welcome the initiative by the Chambers of Commerce of the region to establish a CEFTA 2006 Forum;

CONFIRM our readiness to work closely with the South Eastern European Investment Committee to ensure that trade and investment policies in the region are mutually reinforcing;

RECOGNISE that the entry into force of CEFTA 2006 means that the Parties have assumed full responsibility for the development of trade relations in the region;

EXPRESS our gratitude to the Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact and the Stability Pact's Trade Working Group for their considerable role in preparing the Parties for this important task;

COMMIT the best efforts of our administrations to co-operate with the newly created Regional Co-Operation Council and its Secretary General;

THANK the international community for the important assistance it has provided in the past and look forward to its continued assistance in the future.

Adopted in Ohrid, 28 September 2007.