

**CEFTA Joint Committee Meeting
Podgorica, 29 October 2009**

**Statement by Mr. Branko Vujovic,
Minister of Economy of Montenegro**

Ladies and gentlemen,
Respected guests,

Since January 1, when Montenegro assumed the presidency over the CEFTA Agreement, it has been actively worked on achieving the goals of our presidency. Great attention was dedicated to promoting CEFTA as one recognizable multilateral agreement, which is of great importance for all of us in the Region, especially under the conditions of the economic crisis. Having in mind that our economies have not yet reached the competitiveness level that would allow all of us to access larger markets, particular relevance is assigned to this agreement.

Statistical indicators show that the decline suffered by the regional trade at the time of crises was slighter than the decline suffered by the Region in respect to the world. Therefore, such fact by itself commits us to turn towards the Region and to use all opportunities given by strengthening such cooperation. Improvement of the business ambient in the region may have only positive effect and trade increase may represent one of the paths towards coming out from the crisis. In present days, when the globalization is more recognized, small economies, with small markets, such as certain markets of CEFTA signers, will be able to obtain their position only if connected. Good connectivity and joint rules in the Region will at the same time also increase inflow of the foreign direct investments.

Period since assuming the presidency was signified, apart from the great work of all of us, by certain problems which have been partially solved, while some of them still remain as ongoing. We do not consider problems as something that can not be solved and that we have to close our eyes to them, on contrary we deem that the Agreement actually exists so that the parties could agree and within the spirit of internationally accepted rules solve mutual problems. I see them as the originators of further negotiations and the element whose solution brings to strengthening of mutual cooperation. With the ability to solve disputable situations we show our maturity for wider integrations into the international community.

One of the goals set up by Montenegro at the beginning of its presidency is strengthening of cooperation through liberalization of agricultural sector, which has been mostly completed by now. Fulfillment of this goal adds significance since we know that negotiations on further liberalization of agriculture within the World Trade Organization have been unsuccessfully going on since 2001.

In addition, aware of the significance of eliminating the trade barriers, we have initiated negotiation on executing the agreement on harmonizing the sanitary and phytosanitary measures and their mutual recognition, as well as negotiations on the execution of plurilateral agreements on harmonizing the technical regulations and standards and mutual recognition of procedures for the harmonization assessment.

Initiatives for expanding the application of diagonal accumulation in CEFTA region have been initiated. There are certain difficulties in implementation of CEFTA Agreement and one of them is much expanded non-custom barriers. Today, all of us present here are aware of the fact that good cooperation is the main originator of revealing and eliminating the barriers that exist.

With the aim to provide to everyone the opportunity and possibility to get introduced with the idea of CEFTA, to exchange ideas and experience, we have organized CEFTA WEEK in the previous two days and for the same reason have gathered civil servants of the Region, economic and international community and the European Commission. We hope that the results of CEFTA WEEK will be noticeable very soon for the benefit of the whole Region.

CEFTA Agreement represents multilateral agreement on free trade in the Regional sense, but also represents preparation for further Euro-Atlantic integrations of the whole Region, which represents our joint goal.

I hope that the constructive work of today's meeting will contribute to the further development of CEFTA idea and will prove that we are capable of finding the solutions for the problems within the spirit of internationally accepted rules.

In the name of that I'm opening the meeting of the Joint Committee.