

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Montenegro, I would like to greet you and to congratulate representatives of the Republic of Serbia on their chairmanship so far, and wish them success in realisation of the defined goals.

CEFTA Agreement progressively gains in its importance in Montenegro, thus giving great significance to realisation of the defined goals as well. Since it was signed, Montenegro has been providing full support to the Agreement and believes that connections in the Region and our readiness to participate in regional integrations represent one of the priorities for Euro-Atlantic integration.

During our chairmanship in 2009, we initiated the process of liberalisation of agricultural sector. However, I can conclude with regret that, although Montenegro made significant efforts, this goal was not achieved during our chairmanship, as well as that no progress has been noticed in the first five months of this year. Activities initiated and agreed in Montenegro a year ago should lead to almost full liberalisation of the agricultural sector, with especially positive results in the overall trade. Therefore, I would like to invite you all to take part in realisation of this very important goal for all Parties.

In the previous period, CEFTA Parties, as small economies, have been exposed to the economic crisis. In spite of the global disturbances that caused damage not only to our economy, the crisis was an opportunity for Montenegro to put the started projects and defined policies in the context of long-term development. Economic and financial crisis imposed an obligation of reconsidering and adapting our policies to external circumstances and global economic trends. Nowadays, the Government of Montenegro focuses all its efforts on restructuring of Montenegrin economy, fiscal adjustments, creation of conditions for simplified operating, new investments, etc., all with the view to creating favourable environment for business and opening possibilities for new financial connections, in order to reduce the state's interventions to the lowest possible extent in the years after the crisis. Only free and open economies can lead to GDP growth and improvement of citizens' standard of living.

In fact, the year 2011 will bring certain challenges. Already now, we are facing a set of opened issues such as further functioning of the Secretariat, its employees, adoption of the agreed decision in the circumstances of the economic crisis. In my opinion, existence of the Secretariat is extremely important, and once more I would like to thank Mrs. Renata Vitez and her team for full support that they provided to us during our chairmanship.

I will take this opportunity to stress that CEFTA Agreement has become a reality and turned out to be internationally recognisable, but also that faster adoption of the agreed decisions is necessary for its further functioning. The agreed issues have to be officially adopted for the purpose of further development and connecting, because without such a finalisation we will enter 2011 with a number of agreed but not adopted decisions by all Parties, which is a prerequisite defined by the Agreement.

In the period ahead of us, our economies will hopefully overcome the economic crisis and start to expand again. Existence of such an agreement and liberalisation raised to a higher level represent one more important possibility for faster progress of entire economies.

Thank you for your attention.