

**PROPOSAL
PRIORITIES FOR THE CEFTA CHAIRMANSHIP 2014**

June 2013

I INTRODUCTION

As set out in the CEFTA 2006 Decision No.1/2007 Rules of Procedure (Article 3), Macedonia will take over the Chairmanship of the CEFTA 2006 from Bosnia and Herzegovina in January 2014. The Chairmanship is taken on rotational basis with tenure of office of one calendar year.

As an overall objective of its Chairmanship, Macedonia will be committed to deepen the implementation of CEFTA in order to promote the intra-CEFTA trade through facilitating trade in goods and liberalising trade in services with a view to supporting the implementation of the South East Europe Strategy 2020.

II PRIORITIES OF THE CHAIRMANSHIP FOR 2014

In the framework of this objective, Macedonia has determined the following as the priorities of its Chairmanship in 2013.

- i) Further liberalisation of trade in agricultural goods and trade in services,*
- ii) Deepening the implementation of CEFTA for further facilitating trade,*
- iii) Promoting the regional cooperation in competition policy, IPR and Public Procurement,*
- iv) Sustaining synergy between implementation of CEFTA and the South East Strategy 2020*

1) Further liberalisation of trade in agricultural goods and trade in services

1. Gradual liberalization of trade in services - Macedonia fully supports the gradual liberalisation of intra-regional trade in services as stipulated in the Article 27 of the Agreement with the ultimate objective to sign the Additional Protocol on Trade in Services. Apart from this, Macedonia will engage efforts to deepen the cooperation amongst regulatory bodies and professional associations, and work on improving the quality of statistics in services across the region.

2. Boosting regional trade of agricultural products - Following the initiative in 2013 of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania, as well as Macedonia and Moldova to remove the existing tariffs and quotas, the objective of 2014 would be to urge the ratification of Additional Protocol on further liberalisation and thus ensure the “zero tariffs” area in trading of agricultural products within the CEFTA region.

ii) Deepening the implementation of CEFTA for further facilitating trade

1. Enhancing transparency at the regional level to systemize detecting trade irritants -

Through employing the existing tools like the **Market Access Trade Barriers Database**, or developing new tools (the ones to be developed under the Transparency Pack) the detection of trade irritants and classification them is to be systemised. The access to these tools is also to be partially granted to the private sector to encourage them to be involved in detecting trade irritants more effectively.

With the objective to promote the achievements of the CEFTA Agreement in the area of sanitary, phytosanitary and veterinary cooperation, Macedonia plans to develop further the **CEFTA SPS Database** created in 2013. This would include a number of additional features to the existing information on key legislation and SPS measures with a view of addressing the needs not only of government officials but also of the private sector and academia.

Furthermore, Macedonia places great importance to the activities destined to attract the investment and envisages improvement of transparency in the area of quality infrastructure across the region. In 2014, the efforts will be engaged to develop the **CEFTA TBT Platform** which will feature the online notifications of relevant legislation and the specific information related to key areas such as accreditation, standardisation, metrology and market surveillance.

2. Harmonising data submission requirements in trade and elimination of the redundant or contradictory data according to the WO and EU -

Mapping of data submission requirements is to be prepared. If necessary, prioritisation in mapping is to be made in accordance to risk and trade value. The CEFTA Parties are to be proposed to adopt an exhaustive list of data submission requirements without prejudice to any data that to be needed for safety and security controls by the agencies in case of serious doubts.

3. Enhancing cooperation in SPS matters -

The activities on the cooperation in SPS matters will include the: (i) implementation of the recommendations of the Multilateral Monitoring Framework on elimination of the NTBs related to the sanitary, phytosanitary and veterinary measures; (ii) synchronised harmonisation of domestic regulation and measures with those of EU and WTO in priority areas; (iii) developing of a sustainable and regular consultation process on regional positions in international organisations, preparation of residue monitoring plans, traceability, certificates in use; (iv) Coordination of regionally national activities in implementing a risk based approach in inspection and lab testing, including surveillance of plant pests, animal diseases and food safety.

4. **Promoting free trade without barriers** - Macedonia places the elimination of the NTBs very high on the agenda of its Chairmanship. Therefore, the work done in previous years, in cooperation with the OECD, on creating the environment free of potential barriers will be continued and deepened in the areas of mutual benefit to all Parties. The set of recommendations developed by the OECD and endorsed at the last Joint Committee will be taken dully into account and Macedonia urges Parties to show their commitment when implementing it in a given time frame.
5. **Reducing technical barriers to trade** - In the area of elimination of unnecessary technical barriers to trade, Macedonia will engage efforts to: (i) conclude the *Agreement on Conformity Assessment Issues and on Easing of Market Access of Industrial Products*; (ii) encourage the rest of CEFTA Parties National Accreditation bodies to meet requirements for signing EA MLA for specific accreditation scope; (iii) conclude multilateral or plurilateral agreements on cooperation in the field of standardisation, accreditation and metrology among the national bodies of the CEFTA Parties; (iv) enhance regional cooperation of national CABs when participating in proficiency testing schemes.
6. **Initiating an EU Compliant CEFTA Authorised Economic Operator Programme** - A pilot project on mutual recognition of AEOs is to be initiated in which volunteered operators are to participate and can be granted AEO status by customs if they meet the criteria as defined by the EU acquis and national legislation. The pilot is to be for a limited time period and based on its results, the CEFTA Parties are to consider establishing a formal CEFTA AEO Programme based on mutual recognition. The involvement of SPS agencies and other technical agencies into the implementation of the pilot is to be encouraged.
7. **Establishing CEFTA Trade Facilitation High Level Task Force** - A high level task is to be created to coordinate all trade facilitation related activities of CEFTA Bodies. The Task Force is to be composed of the Chairs of CEFTA Subcommittees and Working Groups, and to be chaired by the Chair in Office. The Task Force is to report to the CEFTA Deputy Ministers.

iii) Promoting the regional cooperation in competition policy, IPR and Public Procurement

1. **Creating regional networks in Competition Policy, IPR, and Public Procurement**- the Chair in Office is to take initiative to create regional networks among the national authorities in the CEFTA Parties in the areas of competition policy, IPR, and Public Procurement. The objective of these networks is to exchange of their experiences, information sharing and coordinate the activities that are foreseen in the SEE 2020.

iv) Sustaining synergy between implementation of CEFTA and the South East Strategy 2020

- 1. Steering the implementation of Integrated Growth Component of the SEE 2020** - Through the governance bodies that to be created under the SEE 2020, the Chair in Office is to ensure steering the implementation of Integrated Growth Component of the SEE 2020 in line with the implementation of the CEFTA. The CEFTA Secretariat with its extended mandate is to be the main tool of the Chair in Office for ensuring the coordination between CEFTA and the SEE.

III COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND REGIONAL INITIATIVES

Macedonia will continue to maintain close contacts with all the current partners who support the implementation of the CEFTA Agreement. In this sense, the cooperation will be carried on with: OECD in the area of elimination of NTBs and in trade in services; with the World Bank and IFC in the area of trade in services and trade logistics respectively; GIZ and the EC and their trade related regional projects.

The Chair will further promote and support cooperation with regional partners such as RCC, CEI and SEETO. Common point of interest and action could be explored with other international organizations.

The Chair will promote the CEFTA Project Facility as a tool where other international and bi-lateral donors can contribute in order to support the implementation of CEFTA related priorities.

IV CONSTRAINTS

Macedonia is committed to ensure the functioning of CEFTA activities on the technical level in the best conditions. On this purpose will do its best in order to ensure financial support for fulfilling the work plan, including by continuing cooperation with other relevant organisations.