



REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRADE AND
ENTERPRENEURSHIP

CEFTA Joint Committee Meeting
21 November 2014

“Evolution of priorities in CEFTA in the framework of the SEE 2020 Strategy”

Distinguished Ministers,

State Secretaries,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Time passes fast and I'm very pleased we meet again. We are proud we have progressed and succeeded in the year agenda showing trust, willingness and commitment to the regional cooperation. I take this opportunity to congratulate Macedonia for its dedication during this year of Chairmanship and express our readiness to join other countries effort to achieve sustainable growth and prosperity while integrating to the European market.

The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Entrepreneurship of Albania regrets for not being here today and expresses his full support to CEFTA. Allow me to express on behalf of the Government of Albania our full commitment to the regional development and cooperation and to the new area we are living in.

Priorities in CEFTA are evolving to simultaneously accommodate the challenges of the regional development and national goals. Prospering and improving the citizens life is at core of all initiatives for all governments throughout the region while the path to achieve it is vital.

CEFTA is very important politically and economically for all our countries. In particular, the Berlin Agenda sets forth a new momentum in the regional cooperation and we are very committed to pursue our common path toward European integration with mutual trust and enthusiasms.

Albania has considerably improved during the last year in the Doing Business by easing the procedures and removing tad tapes for economic operators in the country. We improved our ranking by 40 places, and ranked in Doing Business 2015 at 68th place. This is only the beginning of the battle to fight bureaucracy and improve business climate. We are very committed to deepen the reforms in this regard and consistently improve our ranking.

Ease of Doing Business is seen in relation and as complementary to other areas, in particular World Competitiveness Report and Trade Enabling Index. A consolidated agenda to enhance economic growth and attract foreign investors is in the pipeline. A dedicated team is

working in many reforms and we are confident that the success is there.

Albanian trade with CEFTA countries continues to increase, with new patterns in terms of export and import growth though. Thus, trade in goods with CEFTA countries for the period January-June 2014 increased by 14.6% compared with the same period of previous year reaching the value of 237 million Euros.

The main trading partners from CEFTA are Serbia with 37.6% and Kosovo with 31.1% of the CEFTA trade volume.

I'm pleased to inform you that the Additional protocol 3 to the CEFTA Agreement, liberalizing trade in agriculture between the Republic of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, will enter into force from 1 December 2014.

The strategy SEE 2020 has put the prospects for the regional agenda at a higher stage; focusing not only on economic initiatives but also on very sensitive issues for our nations. Increase of employment opportunities throughout the region and free movement of skilled professional remain among the most sensitive and crucial areas to be considered.

Although we have exhausted almost all possibilities within CEFTA we regrettably note that our intra-trade is still under the potentials. It is therefore our obligation to find ways to foster these potentials and bring the potentials closer to the reality.

We all witness that challenges are higher the closer we go to the European dream. Therefore, I believe that we have to find inner energy and hidden potentials to exploit all regional potentials and reach the strategic goals

Dear Ministers,

We acknowledge that many areas are progressing well while some others need further efforts and commitment. Allow me to express our full commitment to face in a very constructive and active manner all challenges of regional integration and cooperation.

We have a complex agenda ahead and I'm convinced that we have energy and resources to succeed. Building a mutual path remains crucial and we are dedicated to contribute with positive energy for this.

By concluding, I would like to thank the Republic of Macedonia for the hospitality and the great organization of the CEFTA Week and also greet once more the Joint Committee meeting. Let me congratulate also the Republic of Moldova for the chairmanship of CEFTA next year.

Thank you for your attention.