

JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING

Chair's Conclusions

8 December 2022

The Joint Committee (JC) meeting was held on 8 December 2022 in Brussels, chaired by Dumitru Alaiba, Minister of Economy of Moldova in his capacity of Chair-in-Office.

These chair's conclusions reflect the Draft Ministerial Conclusions submitted to the CEFTA Parties prior to the JC meeting and discussed during the CEFTA Contact Points meeting held on 8 December 2022.

1. Parties welcomed the Tirana Declaration from EU-Western Balkan Summit from 6 December 2022 and recognise importance of CEFTA in delivering the results in the implementation of the Common Regional Market. In light of this, the Parties are urged to remove all obstacles for speeding up the activities bringing economic benefits to our businesses.
2. Parties welcomed the outcomes of the Berlin Summit, where three mobility agreements have been signed, including Agreement on the recognition of professional qualifications of Doctors of Medicine, Dentists and Architects in the context of CEFTA, and instructed the Secretariat to further harmonise draft of Decision on the disciplines establishing a general system for the recognition of professional qualifications and present it to relevant CEFTA Bodies for adoption.
3. Parties commended the completion of the internal procedures for entry into force of the Decision of the Joint Committee of the Central European Free Trade Agreement No. 1/2021 amending Annex 4 of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA 2006), setting out the Protocol Concerning the Definition of the Concept of "Originating Products" and Methods of Administrative Cooperation referred to in Article 14, paragraph 1 and 3, and repealing and replacing Decision No. 3/2013 and Decision 3/2015 of the Joint Committee of the Central European Free Trade Agreement adopted in July 2021, in order to introduce transitional rules in alongside the rules of PEM Convention. The Decision is to be applied as of 1 February 2023.
4. Parties commended the significant progress achieved in the negotiations on the CEFTA Dispute Settlement Mechanism, so far referred as the Additional Protocol 7 on CEFTA Dispute Settlement, seeking to deliver formal rules and procedures for the settlement of trade disputes between the Parties, and urged the CEFTA Parties to continue with the constructive approach in negotiations with a view of closing the remaining open issues and completing the process by the first half of 2023, taking note of the support that will be provided by EC and UNCTAD in the implementation of the agreed Protocol.
5. Parties praised the work performed by the CEFTA Parties and CEFTA Secretariat in the expansion of the Green Lanes/Corridors to all intra-CEFTA BCP/CCPs, including rail, and strongly encourage the work on the extension of the Green Lanes/Corridors initiative to the neighbouring EU Member States CEFTA Parties involved in data exchange with EU MS are encouraged to promptly complete all activities necessary for data exchange. Recalling the Brdo Summit Declaration and Tirana Summit Declaration, the Parties urged the European Commission to provide the neighbouring EU Member States with the necessary legal and technical support for the extension of the Green Lanes/Corridors. Recognizing the need to

further facilitate trade with the EU we call on the deeper cooperation in the area of customs and invite the EU to take the necessary steps so that this cooperation could be achieved.

6. Parties welcomed publication of statistical data on utilization of the Green Lanes/Corridors initiative and waiting time in accordance with the agreed methodology, as a step towards reduction of waiting times at our BCP/CCPs, one of the goals set by Sofia Summit.
7. Parties welcomed the progress achieved in the implementation of the CEFTA Customs Risk Management Strategy and invite the Parties to continue with the constructive approach so that the legal framework for the electronic system for facilitation of risk management for trade in goods can be set. The Parties praised the involvement of the agencies involved in the process of clearance of goods in the risk management agenda by executing joint actions with the customs administrations in CEFTA, creating a solid basis for the reduction of controls while protecting safety and security.
8. The Parties are urged to continue the activities on harmonization of working hours of the agencies involved in clearance of goods, with a view to reducing unnecessary delays and reducing trade costs.
9. Parties welcomed the progress achieved in the implementation of the Decision of the Joint Committee No. 1/2020 on Facilitating Trade for Fruits and Vegetables reflected in the endorsement of the certification procedures, execution of actions on declaring the pest status and establishing the generic and pest specific contingency plans. The Parties are urged to continue enforcing the measures envisaged by the Decision thereby creating a conducive environment to increase trade in fruit and vegetables in CEFTA.
10. Parties welcomed the progress performed under the Quality infrastructure, outlined in the proposal for recognition of the results of conformity assessment of industrial products between the CEFTA Parties which is under discussion. The Parties are encouraged to continue constructive engagement with a perspective that the recognition programme is delivered early next year.
11. Parties welcomed visions and plans for the implementation of CEFTA central databases on AEO and Market Surveillance and commit to take all necessary measures that would enable faster implementation of those databases in 2023.
12. Parties welcomed the work done on the establishment of CEFTA TRACES NT supporting the exchange of data and certificates, with a final goal of improving risk management in CEFTA and enabling paperless trade. The CEFTA Parties are strongly urged to harmonize the second page of the veterinary certificates that is a prerequisite for such a certificate exchange and to reconcile the positions and to adopt the Veterinary Decisions. Parties further commit to secure all necessary measures for seamless implementation of all stated activities.
13. Parties welcomed the technological and functional upgrade of the CEFTA Transparency Pack and Statistical Portal and urge the CEFTA Parties to establish adequate mechanism to keep data regularly updated with a final goal of increasing transparency and ensuring credibility of tools built.

14. Parties reaffirmed commitment to fully implement the Additional Protocol 6 on Trade in Services and launch preparatory work on its review to be adopted in 2023.
15. Parties welcomed the progress in technical discussions on Decision on services provided by travel agencies and tour operators and we call for Subcommittee on Trade in Services to complete discussions and present draft for adoption in the first quarter of 2023.
16. Recognising the importance of the movement of natural persons for trade in service, Parties invited Bosnia and Herzegovina to swiftly complete internal consultations with a view of providing feedback on the draft of the Decision from June 2021. Parties also invited the Subcommittee on Trade in Services to complete technical discussions on this draft efficiently and present it for adoption in first half of 2023.
17. Parties commit to adapt and integrate disciplines based on the WTO Reference Paper INF/SDR/1 into the CEFTA framework and instruct the Subcommittee of Trade in Services to complete discussions efficiently.
18. Parties welcomed the work initiated under the Moldovan Chairmanship on third-party liability vehicle insurance, guidelines on transparency and notification and non-bank payment service provider and encourage cooperation and partnerships with other regional organisations in this regard.
19. Parties welcomed the progress in the discussions on the CEFTA framework for intellectual property rights and support the cooperation with EUIPO with a view to achieve deeper market integration and use of IP assets for economic growth.
20. Parties welcome the cooperation with the businesses, civil society organisations and academia requesting the expansion of such cooperation considering the new policies stemming from the implementation of the CEFTA Additional Protocols and Joint Committee Decisions.
21. Parties instructed the CEFTA Secretariat to speed up the procedure for the recruitment of the new Director of the CEFTA Secretariat in order to have timely and smooth transition of the management.
22. Taking into account the importance of the role of the CEFTA Secretariat, and the implementation of the EU Action Grant, the Parties took note of the annual budget of CEFTA Secretariat for 2022 in the amount of 1,198,000.00 EUR as agreed by the Joint Committee in the Decision 1/2018 on the Functioning of the Secretariat.

On the request of Kosovo* regarding its representation in CEFTA, and based on the positions of Parties' expressed in the meeting, Chair concluded that the consensus on the Kosovo*'s request was not reached.

Due to the lack of consensus Joint Committee Decisions and the Joint Committee Conclusions were not adopted.

Issued in Brussels, on 8 December 2022.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.