



“South Eastern Europe must dramatically boost trade and investment if it is to secure the necessary, capital, technical and managerial inputs and thereby generate higher employment opportunities in SEE. Developing and implementing a clear and consistent trade policy is a fundamental requirement for a market economy and for instilling confidence in the business community.”

BACKGROUND & KEY CHALLENGES

- Overall low levels of trade, particularly intra-regional trade, fragmented markets and widespread non-tariff barriers to trade
- Need for efficient, effective and transparent regimes for trade and investment throughout the region
- Attainment and compliance with international standards and regulations governing trade in order to exploit opportunities presented by regional and global trade policy

ROLE & STRATEGY OF THE INITIATIVE

- Provide a forum for senior trade officials from the region and international bodies to develop and implement a regional trade liberalisation strategy
- Encourage countries of the region to structure and harmonise their trade regimes initially through the conclusion of free trade agreements (FTAs), now through consolidation of these into a regional FTA as well as the implementation of a programme to reduce non-tariff barriers
- Ensure that the region is further integrated into European and multilateral trading systems

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE & THE WAY AHEAD

- Conclusion of an MoU on Trade Liberalisation and Facilitation (June 2001) leading a network of 32 bilateral free trade agreements that have contributed to rapidly rising rates of intraregional trade
- SEE Prime Ministers' Declaration of 6 April 2006 to consolidate the network of bilateral agreements into one single agreement. Conclusion of multilateral negotiations on the simultaneous enlargement and amendment of the Central Europe Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) to enter into force by mid 2007
- Implementation of agreed regional approach to removing non-tariff barriers and further work on rules of origin, trade in services and phytosanitary issues

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