



**Minutes of the Twenty-Fourth Meeting of the Working Group on Trade Liberalisation and Facilitation, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 17 and 18 July 2007**

**Executive Summary**

The twenty-fourth meeting of the Stability Pact's Trade Working Group was hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The meeting focused on the preparations for the instigation of new regional structures for trade relations in South Eastern Europe and on issues relating to key non-tariff barriers to trade including customs procedures.

CEFTA 2006 enters into force on 26 July for Albania, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and UNMIK Kosovo. Croatia as Depositary will forward copies of the notification to TWG members to facilitate preparations in those countries. Croatia expects to deposit its instrument of ratification in the coming days and hence the Agreement will enter into force for it in August. The Serbian Government has passed the law on CEFTA and it will now proceed to Parliament where it will follow a fast track procedure. It should be ratified in early September. The BiH House of Representatives is to vote on the Agreement on 31 July.

Macedonia has issued invitations to the first JC meeting of CEFTA 2006, in Orhid on September 28, to be preceded by a technical meeting the day before. The Chair informed the TWG that in preparation for the JC meeting the Interim Task Force had:-

- Finalised the proposed Rules of Procedure for the Joint Committee, except for Article 11 on which Macedonia has a reserve. After clarification of its position a final version will be circulated by 25 July.
- Agreed to circulate the revised agreed draft of the Decision on the Mandate of the Secretariat on 25 July for comments. This draft may be revised further subject to getting further information on legal issues.
- Requested the Secretariat to circulate further information on the breakdown of the draft budget and provide a proposed salary grid by 27 July and to circulate a draft decision creating a Selection Committee and propose a selection process to be followed and job descriptions for the secretariat staff by early September.

- Agreed that the CEFTA parties share the costs of the secretariat using a fixed plus variable model and that Albania, BiH and Serbia would submit their calculations to the Secretariat by 20 July. The Secretariat will incorporate the budget figures into the three cost-sharing models and circulate with a recommendation by 3 August.
- Requested the Secretariat to circulate draft terms of reference for the three CEFTA sub-committees by 3 August.
- Agreed that mechanisms be put in place to strengthen the important links of CEFTA with the RCC and with the international community, including e.g. back to back meetings with JC meetings.

The TWG meeting stressed the crucial importance of non-tariff barriers and decided that the individual NTB annual reports and the final assessment prepared following the USAID sponsored meeting of NTB focal points be posted on the SP web site and circulated as appropriate. It was noted that the methodology used for eliminating NTBs needed to be improved.

The meeting provided a valuable opportunity to hear reports on the activities being undertaken under the auspices of the US Department of Commerce's Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP) in the areas of customs co-operation and phyto-sanitary standards. These programmes were welcomed as providing valuable input to the sub-committees to be established under CEFTA and ensuring that these activities were in line with the regional framework provided by CEFTA.

Following an initial discussion on the Albanian proposal for a project to facilitate on-going efforts to tackle NTBs, participants will send comments by 27 July so that a revised proposal could be submitted to GTZ on behalf of the CEFTA Parties.

The importance of ensuring good communication with the business community was emphasised and in particular the participants agreed that co-operation between CEFTA and the new Standing Forum of Chambers of CEFTA 2006 created by the Chambers of Commerce of the region should be pursued. The Secretariat will ascertain the availability of the CEFTA domain for a website and update the SP website in the meantime. The Macedonian Ministry will consider putting a CEFTA page on its website.

The next and final TWG meeting be held in October/November at a venue to be determined.