



**REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

**PRESIDENT**

**A D D R E S S**

**by**  
**the President of the Republic of Macedonia**  
**H.E. Mr. Branko Crvenkovski**

**Dubrovnik, 22 November 2007**

Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished attendees,

I sincerely salute You by expressing my satisfaction from this year's joint realization of the fourth regional economic forum of regional states. There is no doubt that the Forum has become a clearly recognizable institution, enabling in a remarkable way a respectable debate on our political and economic activities. Most importantly, it contributes in practice to their realization. The fact that it represents an authentic regional initiative once again confirms the conclusion reiterated at our numerous meetings – that regional states can independently recognize the joint values and express readiness for mutual efforts.

I am convinced that today in Dubrovnik – a town uniting millennia, people, cultures and traditions – we will agree once again that our countries move unstoppably towards the wanted European future, leaving past problems behind and working intensively in the presence. In one word, our region continues to move forward.

I believe You concur when I say that our committed efforts have been successful in transferring from the past decade of disintegration and divisions into a decade of regional networking and integration process. This has not been a simple process. Breaking up outdated, but rooted Balkan stereotypes, affirmation of mutual values opposite to isolated interests represented a huge effort and sacrifice. Still, the result is more than positive.

Integration is no longer perceived as the necessary evil or an imposed instrument for resolution of past problems. On the contrary, the process of our integration in the European Union represents an autochthonous and almost plebiscite requirement of our citizens, the number one priority for us, the ones responsible for it. It represents an obligation to move forward with the policy of joint and permanent security and stability through the concept of economic development and full acceptance of democratic standards.

Finally, by moving towards the European Union, we should first succeed in bringing Europe into our own countries.

For that objective, our states must continue to mobilize and appropriately focus their complete internal potential. However, in order for the process to be more efficient and most importantly, faster, we must use and coordinate the overall potentials of the region too. Therefore, I believe that the dilemma whether our countries are competitors or partners in the integration process has been overcome. It is more than clear that integration itself means and requires joint work, partnership and regional cooperation in order to achieve success. These things exist.

Regional states have significantly improved their economic cooperation. Although far from perceived possibilities, the use of the free trade agreements has contributed to the reopening of our markets and reestablishment of interrupted ties among business communities. Bringing down political and commercial barriers has resulted in increased mutual trade and revival of the economy in general. Moreover, the region's attractiveness for entry of foreign investments has significantly improved.

In this sense, I believe that CEFTA's redefinition will improve even more the performances of our economies. We should not miss the chance to additionally increase the trade volume, and what is even more important, to improve competitiveness, enable the entry of new technologies and working habits. Thus, we will pass the test regarding our economies, along with the readiness to be part of the wider European market.

The initiated regional partnership in other fields must resume without any delays. The established debate on a joint regional response to energy challenges should undoubtedly result in concrete results. Our individual concepts and projects must not be excluded. On the contrary, they should be coordinated, so that they are part of a successful joint plan for overcoming of the unpleasant energy state in the region. Our commitment is to work together in building new energy capacities, but also modernize and reconstruct the existing, underdeveloped energy infrastructure. I am convinced that we are on the right path to succeed in this in the near future.

Our priority must also be the immediate improvement of infrastructure in general, so that we resume in practice to mutually connect one another. In this regard, competition must too be replaced with partnership. We need a joint performance before our European partners. Our ultimate goal must be turning the Balkan corridors and ties into European ones.

We are most responsible within the process of European Union integration. The commitment to resume work towards a climate of friendship and good neighborly relations, implement the highest democratic standards and build societies where human rights are being respected, remains unchanged. Building stable and European institutions that enable functioning of the legal state must continue. I believe that mutual support and coordination in the fight against organized crime and corruption, where we achieved process in the past, should be intensified. Mutual exchange of experiences in the accession process is exceptionally significant, and in this sense, I expect that mutual and united assistance enable a more quality and faster accession of our countries in the EU.

Distinguished colleagues,

European Union integration is of enormous significance for the Republic of Macedonia. Determination of EU membership as the highest state priority since the country's independence, along with the absolute citizens' support, represents a huge responsibility and obligation, but at the same time a benefit for use of the entire potential in order to succeed.

Moreover, taking into account the ethnic, political and economic-social consensus, our integration in the EU enables long-term internal integration of the country itself.

Prior activities have resulted in serious progress. Obtaining of the candidate status in 2005 was a reward for the implemented difficult reforms, but at the same time it represented an encouragement for more intensive continuation in building stable institutions, in the fight against crime and corruption, reforms in judiciary and public administration, and before all, in the improvement of economic performances and increase of the citizens' living standard.

Some challenges are still present. The priorities are familiar and precise. The most important thing for us at the moment is to fully focus and meet, without delay, the obligations, resulting in added quality and accelerated tempo on the EU path. I am convinced that all relevant factors possess such will, I believe that we possess the knowledge and capacity for this, and I know that we must complete them because of the responsibility towards our citizens and their future.

I expect success resulting in a European Union accession talks date by the end of 2008, thus bringing the Republic of Macedonia into a higher and certain stage of Union full-fledged membership.

Distinguished friends,

Resolution of internal problems in the European Union, along with the message regarding the further continuation of the enlargement process is exceptionally positive, encouraging and useful for our states. The irreversible process of our countries' integration in the European Union is encircled and strengthened through the concluded and initialed Stabilization and Association Agreements of other regional countries, as well as the excellent negotiating process of Croatia, and the expected start of such talks with Macedonia.

Finally, by extending my congratulations to the organizer on an excellent Forum, allow me to conclude that our countries – partners on the road towards the EU – will definitely be even stronger partners as full-fledged Union members.

Thank You.