

Distinguished representatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe,
Distinguished friends of the European Commission,
Distinguished colleagues Ministers,
Distinguished participant of the Ministerial meeting,

It is my honor to address you, on the occasion of such an impressive gathering, and convey the experience of Montenegro on transport connectivity, and thus contribute to the discussion that needs to focus us on making conclusions with multiple benefits for all states participating and cooperating through the format of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, as well.

The process of connecting the Western Balkan, that is, the **Connectivity Agenda** was given a significant support, primarily through the Summit of the Presidents of Governments of the Western Balkan Six (WB6), which was held in Berlin in August in 2014 for the first time, with the support of German Government, Chancellor Merkel and high officials of the European Union. At that time, the need for improvement of connectivity among the Western Balkan countries with each other, as well as with the EU, was recognized as a necessity, which represents a key factor for increasing competitiveness of the region and promotion of growth and employment.

Now, we can even look back at the **Berlin Process and Connectivity Agenda** with certain years of service and experience. It has been more than two and a half year since the first Conference in Germany, encouraged by political leadership, provided through the Connectivity Agenda, and strengthened **cooperation of the Presidents of Governments of the Western Balkan six**, who gathered in Vienna in 2015, in Paris in 2016, and this year, in July will meet again in Trieste, with the aim to discuss the progress in terms of the **Connectivity Agenda. The Core Transport Network for the Western Balkan Region** has been established recently, at the indicative extension of the Core Trans-European Transport network, **the List of Priority Projects**, that need to be operated, and which will create preconditions for its implementation, has been defined, and **the Set of reform (soft) measures** for connecting 2016-2020 has been defined, which are implemented in cooperation with the European Commission and the SEETO Secretariat.

The Projects of interest for Montenegro, being on the List of identified projects on indicative extension of the Core Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) for the Region of the Western Balkan shall have the absolute priority in the upcoming period, including the projects on **extended Trans-European Corridors: Mediterranean and Middle East – East Mediterranean Corridor, connected by a third corridor that is extended to the region of the Western Balkan, namely the internal waterway Corridor Rhine-Danube.**

It is in the interest of Montenegro to connect to the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) **through the aspect of multi-modality (which includes internal**

waterways through the territory of the Republic of Serbia). Primarily, it is our intention to connect Montenegro through the railway and highway corridor from the Port of Bar – via the Capital Podgorica, across the border with the Republic of Serbia, then further to Belgrade to the corridors 7 and 10. TEN-T corridor 10 will enable Montenegro to connect Romania, Hungary and Central Europe. Railway from the Port of Bar to Vrbnice (border with the Republic of Serbia) and the Bar-Boljare Highway (border with the Republic of Serbia) will also connect Adriatic ports with ports on the Danube, and through the Corridors 7 and 10 it shall be connected further to the Trans-European Corridors, contributing therefore that needs of Kosovo and Serbia are effectively met. At the same time, this will be the shortest connection of Hungary and Romania through Serbia and Montenegro with southern Italy and Albania, which will significantly affect the economic and political stability of the entire region.

Our common goal is that Western Balkan countries, in the period of the EU accession, ***are better connected,*** and thus encourage economic development and growth, primarily through the infrastructure connections and investment incentives, but also through harmonizing regulatory policies in this field.