

Statement of Mr. Gjoko Tanasoski, Director General of the Customs Administration of North Macedonia, 27 Oct. 2020

Respected Ms. Tuerk, Director of the UNECE Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, Mr. Apostolov, Regional Adviser, respected representatives from the World Bank, UN, European Commission – DG TAXUD, CEFTA Secretariat, dear colleagues from the CEFTA Customs Administrations, ladies and gentlemen

It is my honor and pleasure, on behalf of the Customs Administration and on my own personal behalf, to address you all at the opening of the 3rd Workshop on Single Window and Data Sharing in the Western Balkans.

This event, organized by the Economic Commission for Europe at the United Nations, hosted by the Customs Administration of the Republic of North Macedonia for the third year in a row, is yet another confirmation that even in these circumstances, the Customs Administration remains committed to the cooperation with international organizations in the area of customs operations, trade facilitation and promotion of economic cooperation in the region.

This Workshop comes at the real moment when three of the CEFTA Parties recently started the new World Bank project on the Implementation of the Single Window as a tool for trade facilitation. The topics to be presented and discussed today – Single Window and Data Sharing are the fundamental issues for the development of the Single Window. Also, the Workshop is organized on the eve of the presentation of the long awaited EU legal framework for the Single Window, which shall be also of the great interest and influence for the Republic of North Macedonia, as well as for all CEFTA Parties.

In this regard, I would like to mention that the Customs Administration is the only administration in CEFTA and among few in Europe, which many years ago established a Single Window system for issuing import, export and transit licenses, as one of the most advanced tools to facilitate cross-border trade.

Recently, as I already mentioned, the activities for preparation of the blueprint started under the Project for development and implementation of a new National Single Window, financed with a loan from the World Bank, which is the topic of this workshop. This project is expected to develop and implement a complete new National One-Stop Shop system that will meet the needs and requirements of the Customs Administration, other government institutions responsible for cross-border movement of goods and the business sector, thus further facilitating and accelerating cross-border trade and ensuring compliance with regulations and standards applicable in EU Member States. Through the development of appropriate interfaces, the National Single Window is expected to adequately integrate the national IT systems used in the Customs Administration and other government institutions, that deal with business processes for cross-border movement of goods.

The Single Window is expected to ensure application of the concept of joint risk analysis by the involved institutions and hence the establishment of an advanced reporting system. During this two-day workshop, my colleagues from our expert's team will share

with you the details about the introduction of this system, as well as how far we are on this road.

Let me express my sincere gratitude to the UNECE for the organization of this event that will help us learn more and better understand the importance of the data harmonization and unification in order to have more compatible and comparable system, where UN and EU, together with the WCO are leading agencies in providing the rules for the data sets and sharing the data information among government agencies.

One of our priorities in the past period has been trade facilitation, not only as a program commitment, but an aim to improve the business climate and the conditions for doing business in general through many projects, measures and activities. We do this through concrete support and assistance to companies, direct confrontation with problems and maximum efforts to find solutions.

Therefore, I can today proudly say that the Customs Administration is one of the keystones of the European integration processes in the country, fully prepared to face the challenges posed by modern global trade trends, including the current crisis caused by the pandemic.

Our main priorities and achievements in the past period were focused primarily on the digitalization of customs operations.

Last year, the Customs Administration put into operation the new Customs Declarations and Excise Document Processing System. This system, which is revolutionary in terms of customs operations, replaced the old ASYCUDA system and united several of the existing IT systems into one integral whole. The new system fully integrates the NCTS transit system, the Integrated Tariff Environment ITE-TARIM and the Single Window system for issuing import, export and transit licenses EXIM. The new system introduced electronic paperless customs declaration for all customs procedures in import and export. This system contributes to reducing the cost of trade transactions, facilitating the implementation of free trade agreements, better administration and control. Digitalization of procedures ensures more rational use of resources and more efficient international trade exchange in which traders electronically exchange information with Customs and other institutions involved in customs procedure. The system is in line with international data exchange standards and is grounds for further harmonization with the standards of the European Union, on which we are constantly working.

Under regional cooperation, the Customs Administration has at the same time been working on specific measures to facilitate trade, such as the introduction of Green Corridors and the concept of Authorized Economic Operator in the Republic of North Macedonia. The results are more than visible. In the past few months alone, 15 companies have received authorization - Authorized Economic Operator, and currently 3 more are in the process of being granted. The number, in absolute figures may be small, but in relative figures this number covers nearly 42% of all customs transactions. At the same time, the Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia within CEFTA, submitted requests for mutual recognition of the Authorized Economic Operator Programs, which should contribute to greater data exchange.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I sincerely believe that this workshop will contribute to mutual acquaintance and exchange of experiences on the progress in establishing the Single Window concept and the information sharing between the customs administrations and other competent institutions in cross-border movement of goods between CEFTA parties. The exchange of data and harmonization of data are of crucial importance for the future development of new technologies in the customs area, such as Big Data Science, Artificial Intelligence, Block chain and Risk Management.

I am convinced that the lessons learned, shared experiences and recommendations in this workshop shall be valuable experiences for enhanced cooperation in CEFTA and for better trade facilitation.

Without further ado, I would like to thank you once again for attending this event and wish you successful work.