



Speech of the Secretary of State for European Integration and the Chief Negotiator Ambassador Aleksandar Andrija Pejović at the EU Danube Strategy Foreign Ministers' Meeting, 26 June 2014, Vienna

Your Excellences,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me first greet you and express my gratitude to the organisers, the European Commission and our Austrian hosts. It is an honour to address you on this occasion and to discuss the important issue of prospects and challenges of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR).

The EUSDR is of great importance for enhancing political integration and economic, social and territorial cohesion in the Danube Region. Thus, it is very useful in ensuring efficient and effective coordination with relevant policies, programmes and instruments of the EU. Moreover, we see the importance of the EUSDR together with the EU Strategy of the Adriatic-Ionian Region as an essential tool for promoting cooperation, experience sharing and further integration of the European countries.

Montenegro finds the participation in the EUSDR as a very useful mechanism of coordination and dialogue within its accession process. The Strategy has demonstrated a clear potential in its first phase of implementation and has put the spotlight on a Region with considerable prospective for development and further integration. This is even more significant since the Strategy provides a robust integrated framework for countries and regions to address issues which cannot be handled satisfactorily in an isolated way, but instead require transnational strategic approaches, projects and networking.

The participation of non-EU member states on an equal footing in this process is very important for the success of the Strategy. The new Danube Transnational Programme for the period 2014-2020 is one of the instruments for supporting the participation of the non-member states. We, in Montenegro, see this programme as an additional impulse not only for strengthening the cooperation and linkages between the countries but also for creation of a region which shares joint values such as prosperity, inclusiveness and equal opportunities. The matching territory of the Strategy and the Danube Transnational Programme provides great opportunities for cooperation between the two and we should jointly find the best way to make it work. Montenegro, as a candidate country that has managed to open one third of negotiation chapters by now and is getting ready for participation in the Danube Transnational Programme is thus especially interested and committed to further work and efforts in this process.

By participating in transnational programmes, as well as cooperating with the EU and non-EU member states, Montenegro is preparing for future use of structural and cohesion funds. Through the South East Europe and Mediterranean Programme, we implemented 39 projects in total worth 4 million euro. This experience is valuable for us especially in terms of preparing for the new financial perspective, where we are going to be part of three new programmes Adriatic-Ionian Programme, Danube Programme and Mediterranean Programme.

The thematic areas of the future Danube programme are also important for us, in particular those related to the promotion of business, tourism and competitiveness. All of them coincide with Ipa, our negotiation objectives as well as national development priorities. Therefore, I would like to reiterate the fact that Montenegro finds its place firmly within the EUSDR, as well as the EUSAIR as an excellent instrument bringing us closer to the EU membership.

I thank you!