

General Assembly of the Association of the Balkan Chambers (ABC), in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey – STRENGTHENED COOPERATION IN CREATION OF A REGIONAL PRODUCT

** The General Assembly of the Association of the Balkan Chambers (ABC), from Istanbul, Republic of Turkey send a message to the member-states of the European Union for consistent implementation of the agreements for facilitation of the visa regime with the countries of the region, which is currently one of the largest limitations for the business*

"The overall trade exchange between the countries in the Balkan region amounts annually US\$ 1,5 billion. It is accomplished through 2 million companies and it is a potential which should bring to the countries in the region a maximal benefits and will be a base for their development. In spite of such economic potential, the region still hasn't made a regional product and regional offer – was stated at the General Assembly of the Association of the Balkan Chambers (ABC), that was held on March 23rd, 2008 in Turkey- this year's host-country.

Considering that the regional agreements are some kind of global trade pillar, it was stated that chambers of commerce should be engaged more in spurring of the intra-regional cooperation. It should result into creation of a regional product. However, on that "road" there are still numerous obstacles. This time, were especially emphasized the difficulties in transport connections and customs crossings. According to the members of the Association of the Balkan Chambers, the region is marked with too much customs crossings, which results with number of non-tariff barriers.

In order to make pressure over the governments of the ABC member –states for resolving the problems which burden the mutual economic exchange, it was agreed on 26th November, on the second annual session of the General Assembly of the Association of the Balkan Chambers (ABC), the tenth ministers of economy to be invited with the intention to answer all the questions asked by the presidents of the chamber of commerce. The host of the meeting, Mr. Rifat Hisarcikioglu, Chairman of the ABC this year, especially stressed that the Government of Turkey has clear positions in relation to Balkan and to the cooperation in the region, because Turkey also is a Balkan country. Therefore, Turkey considers the Association of the Balkan Chambers as initiative that will become recognizable as international

organization, with permanent seat and registration in some of its member- countries.

In order to upgrade the Balkans cooperation, the text of the Agreement of Cooperation with the Association of Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASCAME) was confirmed. Multi-Mediterranean business meetings are planned to be held in Edrene, Turkey with the ASCAME in May, 2008. In the same month in Antalya (from 15th to 18th May, 2008) will be held the Mediterranean Business Partenaria where will participate 1.3000 companies from Balkan Peninsula. On November 26th, 2008 again in Istanbul are expected business meetings of the companies from the Balkan countries.

The Economic Chamber of Macedonia will participate on all these meetings, with part of its members