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Speaking Points

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Distinguished guests, esteemed colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is both an honor and a privilege to speak before you today on a topic of paramount importance for the economic development and social welfare of Albania — consumer protection and fair competition. These two pillars are fundamental to the establishment of a just, efficient, and transparent marketplace, where consumers can confidently participate, and businesses can thrive through innovation and fair practices.

Allow me to first emphasize why consumer protection is so critical. Consumers represent the backbone of any economy. Their rights, interests, and safety must be safeguarded to maintain trust in the market system. Without such protection, consumers are vulnerable to deceptive practices, substandard products, and unfair contractual terms, which can severely undermine their welfare and confidence.

Similarly, competition policy plays an equally crucial role by ensuring that markets remain open and dynamic. Fair competition prevents monopolies and abuses of dominant positions, encourages businesses to improve efficiency, reduce prices, and offer better quality products and services. It stimulates innovation and creates an environment where economic growth is sustainable and inclusive.

Albania's pursuit of membership in the European Union (EU) is a transformative journey. This process is not just about political integration; it is a comprehensive strategy aimed at boosting economic growth, strengthening democratic institutions, and strengthening regional stability.

Albania has officially opened four thematic clusters in its EU accession negotiations: Opened Clusters Cluster 1: Fundamentals, Cluster 6: External Relations, Cluster 2: Internal Market, Cluster 3: Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth

Upcoming Clusters Albania is preparing to open the following clusters: Cluster 4: The Green Agenda and Sustainable Connectivity Cluster 5: Resources, Agriculture, and Cohesion

Albania aims to conclude the alignment of EU *acquis* by 2027 and hope the full membership by 2030. This ambitious timeline underscores the country's dedication to reforms and its aspiration to contribute to a united and prosperous Europe.

We are committed to consumer and fair competitiveness as part not only of the path towards the European Union but also recognizing the importance of these areas for ensuring consumer welfare and guaranteeing fair competition. We want to encourage Consumer protection asserts consumer rights and empowers them to make informed and sustainable choices. This allows consumers to play an active role in the markets, encouraging companies to invest and innovate and contributing to a dynamic business environment. Hence, there are synergies between these two policy areas that are mutually beneficial.

Albania has undertaken considerable efforts to harmonize legislation and policies, establishing institutions for the implementation of the law etc.

Of course, the journey towards integration is challenging and full of commitments, and in this process for some phase we have been supported by

Project support

Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation has been supported in the last 5 years on Chapter 28 Consumer protection from different projects. Support has been on the preparation of Albanian Negotiating position on consumer protection

1. Support for alignment of consumer protection EU acquis protection area
2. Support for alignment of consumer protection EU acquis protection area
3. Support on strengthening the dialog with civil society/non-state actors on accession negotiations in the area of consumer protection

UNCTAD PROJECT - FOSTERING COMPETITION LAW AND POLICY AND COMPETITION CULTURE IN ALBANIA

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, UNCTAD, has played a pivotal role in supporting Albania's journey toward enhancing fostering a culture of competition.

In Albania, the dual challenge has been to strengthen both consumer protection mechanisms and competition law enforcement while ensuring that these two areas operate in harmony.

With the support of Fostering Competition Law and Policy and Competition Culture in Albania project was organized the forum which brought together national and international experts, representatives from public and private institutions, as well as other relevant stakeholders, with a focus on the intersection of competition policy and consumer protection in the evolving digital economy.

The event continued with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Competition Authority and the Consumer Protection Commission particularly commendable achievement of this initiative is the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Albanian Competition Authority and the Consumer Protection Commission. This formal agreement is a testament to the commitment of both institutions to work collaboratively rather than in silos. Such cooperation is essential because the interests of consumers and the promotion of competition are inherently intertwined.

Through this Memorandum, the two authorities engage in regular information exchange, joint awareness campaigns, and coordinated actions against anti-competitive practices and violations of consumer rights. The Memorandum also encourages the referral of cases between institutions, ensuring that issues are addressed effectively and comprehensively.

The forum concluded with a wrap-up session, summarizing the discussions and highlighting the importance of continuing integrated approaches and collaboration for the sustainable development of the Albanian market. This event marked an important step toward fostering a stronger culture of competition and consumer protection in Albania.

Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to our continued cooperation and dialogue on this vital topic.