

CONFERENCE

INVESTING IN SOCIAL COHESION
MOSCOW, 26-27 FEBRUARY 2009

**Address by Mr. Xhelal Bajrami, Minister of Labor and Social Policy of the
Republic of Macedonia**

Dear Minister host, dear Secretary general, respected representatives of the Committee of ministers, respected representatives of the Parliamentary assembly, respected representatives of the local and regional authorities, dear colleagues ministers, ladies and gentlemen.

Allow me, on my behalf, and on behalf of the members of the delegation of the Republic of Macedonia, to greet you and wish you fruitful work on this conference.

With this address I would like to introduce you with certain characteristics of the Republic of Macedonia, however, I would emphasize the common goals and objectives of all countries present on the Conference.

Namely, the term social cohesion in the Republic of Macedonia, in its core is understood as capacity of the society to provide and ensure realization of the wellbeing of all citizens, while avoiding, as much as possible, any differentiation and possible polarization among them. Cohesive society is a society understood as community of mutual assistance and individual freedom in reaching common goals in a democratic manner through the democratic available means.

However, furthermore, each society, as it is well known, encounters the problem of division and differentiation from any aspect, such as divisions among citizens from the aspect of wealth into rich or poor, ethnic and cultural differences, and many other differences and divisions.

The main objective of a cohesive society is to resolve these differences, so that they become the source of mutual understanding, assistance and getting closer together, and avoid the possibility of becoming a factor for division and conflict. All this should be accomplished in a democratic manner, through adequate measures to reduce these problems, so that the persistent differences will not hinder the functioning of the society, and the social stability will not be threatened.

This means that the social cohesion is more of an ideal for a society to move forward to, constantly and progressively to put efforts, as much as possible, to get closer to this ideal.

For this purpose, the Republic of Macedonia has accepted the main principles of the content and meaning of the term social cohesion, and through different measures on political, legal, civil, organizational and other level, applies the same in social life.

The Republic of Macedonia has accepted the two most important instruments of the Council of Europe, in the field of human rights: the European Convention for Human Rights and the European Social Charter, which are part of the national legal system of the country.

Furthermore, Republic of Macedonia has also ratified the rest of the legal acts related to this area, adopted by other international organizations, such as UN, the International Labor organization, etc.

Also, the remaining part of the national legal system of the country reflects the concept of social cohesion, by arrangement of certain social areas in accordance with its spirit and meaning.

In this context, I am referring to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, which among other things, defines the country as a social country. The rest of the legal framework is comprised of legislative acts and bylaws in all areas of social life.

I can mention the following: the Law on Social Protection, the Law on Family, the Law on Protection of Children, the Law on Labor Relations, the Law on Employment and Insurance in case of unemployment, the Law on peaceful resolution of labor disputes, the Law on employment of disabled persons, the Law on employment of foreigners, the Law on health and safety at work, the Law on Labor Inspection, the Law on Equal possibilities of men and women, the Law on Health Insurance, the Law on Health Protection, other laws and bylaws.

I would like to emphasize that in the process of Euro-integration, the Republic of Macedonia has put great efforts in harmonization of its domestic regulations with the legislation of the European Union, whereas we consider that we have accomplished a level of harmonization that makes accession of the country possible and expected. By accepting the responsibility for achieving the balance between economic growth and social justice, Republic of Macedonia accepts the so called European approach towards this issue, i.e. equal right to all members of the society, not just provision of some sort of assistance to certain categories of persons.

It is of great importance to point out that the Republic of Macedonia, as the rest of the countries at the moment, faces problems in realization of its goals in this area. These problems are long-term and are the result of the economic power of the country reflected generally through the low standard of living of the citizens. The general difficult economic situation in Europe and the World additionally burden the condition. Anyway, we think that exceptional efforts are necessary by all segments of the society to remain dedicated to resolution of the problems and also remain dedicated to realization of the European approach in provision of socially cohesive society.

In context of realization of this common objective of all here present countries, we shall support the political declaration of this Conference as a guideline for our further movement along the common way, toward progress and wellbeing of our citizens.

Thank you.