

## **Rede von Herrn UAL 62**

**Anlass:** SWG-Ministertreffen  
**Termin:** 25. Januar 2016  
**Ort:** Becici, Montenegro  
**Thema:** Unterstützung des EU-Integrationsprozesses  
**Rededauer:** 10 min

Chairman,  
Ministers,  
Boban Ilic,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

***I. Introduction***

- On behalf of Federal Minister Schmidt, who is unfortunately not able to be here in person, I would like to express my warm thanks for being invited to today's meeting and to pass on my minister's best.
- You are aware that Germany, and Minister Schmidt in particular, have a great interest in your countries and in rapidly integrating your countries into the European Union.

- In January you all came to the BMEL in Berlin during the Green Week for the SWG Round Table with Commissioner Hogan and Minister Schmidt. During the year, Minister Schmidt travelled to Bosnia and Herzegovina in July, welcomed high-ranking visitors from Macedonia in September and last week was in Kosovo and Albania. In addition to this there is our ongoing interest in Serbia and Montenegro, the two countries who are already negotiating in the EU accession process.
- Minister Schmidt would be delighted if you would accept the invitation to next year's Global Forum for Food and Agriculture, which is due to take place from 19 - 21 January 2017, in order to continue our exchange of views and ideas.

## ***II. The EU integration process***

- Agriculture is an important economic sector for your countries.

- The challenges are - despite all the differences - comparable in respect of being competitive.
- I therefore think it is vital for you to present a united front in the convergence process in order to lend weight to your demands.
- Close coordination will also help you to increase efficiency and professionalism in many areas.
- The SWG is the proper platform for improving cooperation and the exchange of experience among your countries.  
And it can also be your voice in the EU institutions.
- You should take advantage of this instrument.

### ***III. Importance of agriculture***

- Your countries are engaged in a transformation process - and I mean that not just in respect of potential membership of the EU, but also and above all in respect of agriculture and rural areas.

- Structural change in agriculture, along with migration, rural migration and urbanisation processes, will make themselves felt in your countries as well.
- It is now vital to invest cleverly in agriculture and rural areas,
- for you know from your own experience that
- there is considerable competitive pressure. Every country and every region should think about its comparative advantages, as that is the key to being competitive, on the European market as well.
- Your agricultural sectors have great potential,
- potential that is not always used to best effect.
- Your regions largely boast favourable climatic and geographical conditions.
- In addition to the necessity of increasing productivity and efficiency, distribution channels and administrative structures need to be strengthened to enable products to be processed and the many small producers to find buyers.

- I am thinking in this regard of the possibility of strengthening cooperative systems and establishing regional trademarks.
- The specialisation in niche products, while diversifying business activities, are cornerstones for prosperity in rural regions.
- The EU instruments IPA and IPARD could provide enormous assistance in this respect.
- The BMEL supports the development of agriculture in the western Balkan region via these instruments.
- We are active in several twinning projects aimed at increasing the competitive capacity of agriculture and adapting agriculture to EU requirements.
- I would also like to suggest making greater use of the EU instrument TAIEX. The BMEL is more than willing to provide assistance on specific problems in expert exchanges and workshops.

#### ***IV. Conclusion***

- Ladies and Gentlemen,

Germany has, based on its past, developed a multifaceted and efficient agricultural sector. Germany's federal structure allows targeted support to be provided for agricultural specialisations, whether they have been brought about by natural conditions or have evolved historically. I would like to invite you to enter into a dialogue with us on these subjects in order to help make your countries and regions more competitive.

Thank you very much!