

DRAFT SPEECH

for Mr. Miklós Kiss State Secretary for the 12th Ministerial Meeting of the South-East European Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG RRD)

15. November, Struga, Macedonia

Dear Ministers and Deputy Ministers,

Dear Secretaries of State,

Dear Secretary General,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege to address you on behalf of Dr. István Nagy, Minister of Agriculture of Hungary.

I have the honour to represent Hungary on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture at the 12. Annual Ministerial meeting of the South-East European Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG RRD) in Struga.

Please allow me to use this opportunity to thank H.E. Ljupco Nikolovski, Macedonia's Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy as well as Mr. Boban Ilic, Director-General of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe for having organized this event.

I would also like to wish Macedonia's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy success and fruitful work for the future tasks of Presidency of SWG.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

The sustainable and competitive economic development of the South-East European countries is a very important topic for the neighbouring countries, including Hungary. We are delighted that as underlined by the Agricultural Policy Forum in Jahorina in October 2018, the countries of the region are getting closer step by step towards the European Union. While there is still a long way ahead of you, I would like to underline that Hungary is committed to support you concerning the integration in political and professional sense as well. I emphasize that we think that the strengthening of trade relations and economic co-operation between our countries of the region is essential for the development.

Our country is honored that it can contribute to the work of an organization, which works on the development of rural areas. EU accession requires finding common goals and achieving them together through joint work.

It was very interesting to read the Jahorina Agenda 2018 that was the result of the Agricultural Policy Forum. The Agenda points out the importance of the reformed EU CAP and how regional legal streamlining could help to speed up the accession process. We also believe, that legal harmonization is the way forward, especially if the Balkan countries wish to take a coordinated approach towards the EU accession. The Agenda also highlighted the importance of giving more transparency to agricultural and rural development policy making while taking evidence based approach towards the subject. As it was in the Podgorica Agenda a year earlier, the importance of the IPARD Programme was also stressed. It is vital that countries in the region use this tool cleverly and provide financial assistance to the sectors that require it most, and the sectors that could have the greatest impact on rural development. The Agenda pinpointed, that small farmers constitute the majority of rural producers in the region, so it is imperative to provide assistance to them to enhance their technologies and help them in access to markets and information. However, I must circle back towards streamlined, and effective policymaking, as direct payments by themselves, cannot achieve success alone. It must be supported by a strong, transparent and streamlined legal framework.

Hungary has been member of the European Union for 14 years, but the challenges and tasks associated with the accession process are not forgotten, particularly in the agricultural sector, because it is an important part of our economy.

We are aware that agriculture plays an important role for the South-East European states, which assume a significant share of employment and the country's GDP. We also know that the agricultural sector plays an important role from social point of view as well.

Therefore Hungary is committed to assist all the countries present, in order to become part of the common European family. Thus, our country's Ministry of Agriculture is ready to offer a helping hand in this matter, as well.

Our country has proven that we are good partners, because the Hungarian Agricultural Ministry has collected considerable experience in the implementation of international development cooperation projects, like Twinning, TAIEX, Technical Assistance projects and cooperation with FAO in South-Eastern Europe. All the countries in the region have participated in one or more of the projects with the following subjects: organic farming, the common market organizations, agricultural and rural development regulation, producer organizations, pest control, as well as several animal welfare, animal health and plant protection areas.

A Twinning project led by Hungary is currently in its closing stage in Serbia. This project will help authorities in expanding their capacities to control AMR, zoonoses and foodborne diseases

Thanks to the Government of Hungary and the FAO, students from the region will continue to have the opportunity to participate in agricultural training in Hungary by getting scholarship grants from the Hungarian Government through its Ministry of Agriculture. Since the start of this program in 2008, we have supported 46 students from the member countries of the SWG,

and we would appreciate if we had even more candidates from the South-East European countries.

Hungary will look for future opportunities to work together with your countries in order to strengthen your economies, to speed up the EU accession processes, and achieve sustainable development as it is written in the goals of Agenda 2030.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are committed to help the development of the Balkan region. The joint efforts of the past years and the currently running professional programs all prove this point. For this reason, I hope that today's meeting of the working group will also be an important milestone in the region's agriculture and rural development, as well as it will be an opportunity for our countries to further deepen our co-operation.

I would like to wish fruitful co-operation in this conference.

Thank you for your kind attention.