

USAID/RCI-Sponsored
 Stability Pact Trade Working Group
 Second Meeting of NTB Focal Points
 “Identifying and Eliminating Non-Tariff Barriers to Trade”
 March 20, 2007
 Skopje, Macedonia

Final Report
21 March 2007

For BC Serdon – Angela Rodel, Foreign Liaison Officer

Project Description: Following the success of the first RCI-sponsored meeting of the NTB (Non-Tariff Barriers) Focal Points in Bucharest on October 31-November 1, 2006, USAID Senior Trade Advisor Jan Forest once again engaged BC Serdon in its capacity as the RCI Regional Coordinator to organize the second meeting, which was held at the Best Western Hotel Turist in Skopje, Macedonia on March 20, 2007.

The NTB Focal Points were appointed from within Ministries of Trade in the 8 SEE countries that make up the Stability Pact (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, and UNMIK/Kosovo; Bulgaria and Romania have withdrawn from the Stability Pact following their accession to the EU). In the months following the first meeting, each Focal Point prepared a draft country report describing the current state of NTBs in his or her respective country, as well as the steps that were being taken to eliminate them. At the second meeting in Skopje, Focal Points discussed their reports with each other, as well as with representatives of the Stability Pact and other outside experts, in order to decide on the final form the reports will take. Since the Stability Pact will be disbanding in late 2007, being replaced by the Regional Coordination Council and its trade relationships will be governed by the new CEFTA 2006 agreement, delegates at the meeting also discussed how to transition this working group into the new CEFTA structures and discussion what recommendations it should offer to the new CEFTA leadership. Final reports will be submitted April 20 and published on the Stability Pact website, and each country’s Ministry of Trade websites, as well as distributed to other groups such as local and national Chambers of Commerce.

Yes	No	Overall Status — At a Glance
X		Was the project completed on time?
X		Was the project completed within budget?
X		Were the project deliverables completed within acceptable quality levels?
X		Were scope change requests being managed successfully?
X		Were project issues being addressed successfully?
X		Are the parties satisfied with the organization and logistical support of the event?

Please find in attachment the following documents:

- Final agenda
- Final list of participants
- Presentations
- Photos

Accomplishments during This Period:

This conference achieved its goals of bringing together the focal points from seven of the eight SEE that are part of the Stability Pact (the representative from Moldova was unable to get a visa in time due to a miscommunication with USAID Macedonia), as well as experts in the field of trade and customs, and members of the Stability Pact Secretariat. A total of sixteen participants took part. During the meeting, the individual country reports were discussed and recommendations for their improvement or expansion were suggested. Also, given that Stability Pact is going to be replaced by the Regional Coordination Council, whose trade relations are governed by the CEFTA 2006 agreement, meeting participants discussed ways to transition the group to fit into new CEFTA structures and developed a list of concrete suggestions for CEFTA leadership as to how they think a body set up to deal with NTBs in the region should be structured.

Participants seemed to be very pleased with the organization and outcome of the meeting. BC Serdon received many positive evaluations and comments from the participants and organizers, especially Ms. Jan Forest.

Outside of the context of the conference, participants had the opportunity to socialize with each other and with the organizers, creating bonds of friendship and opportunities for further cooperation in the future.

Issues during the preparation of the event and action taken henceforth:

The main conference organizers (USAID and Stability Pact) had some difficulties coming to a final decision about the location of the meeting; given the very limited budget for the event, it was difficult to find an appropriate location that would allow for travel and accommodation within the budget. However, BC Serdon conducted preliminary research and provided three alternative locations and budgets to the organizers, who then, following BC Serdon's recommendation, selected Skopje for the meeting. Despite the short preparation time available (less than three weeks), BC Serdon succeeded in making all the necessary preparation. The only problem was the visa for the Moldovan FP; since there was a 10-day waiting period from the Macedonian Ministry of the Interior, which was compounded by the Ministry's miscommunication with USAID Macedonia, the Moldovan FP was unable to get a visa in time.

As with the first meeting, there turned out to be a number of changes to the first list of focal points provided by Stability Pact (certain individuals had changed jobs or could not attend the meetings); this was made more complicated by certain SPTWG Secretariat members' seeming lack of concern for the urgency of the situation (especially regarding visas. The SPTWG was not very insistent about contacting these focal points and confirming their participation and passing on the correct information to BC Serdon. Also, the outside speakers for the group selected by the SPTWG kept fluctuating and were not confirmed in its final form until the day before the meeting, which made planning for logistics more complicated. However, BC Serdon contacted all eight focal points and managed to arrange their travel and accommodation logistics in time for the meeting.

We received certain presentations and conference materials very late (the evening of March 19, when BC Serdon staff was already in Skopje); however, BC Serdon worked until 2 AM

making photocopies and putting together folders at the hotel in order to prepare all the necessary conference materials.

Issues during the event and action taken henceforth:

At all times there was at least one BC Serdon staff member present at the meeting to assist with the technological and logistical aspects of the meeting, and also to work with the hotel staff to ensure the smooth running of events. All participants at the conference were satisfied and there were no major issues to report.

Issues after the event and action taken henceforth:

There was a slight problem with the hotel bill payment, however, BC Serdon staff maintained communication between the hotel and the contractor and eventually the copy was sent and the bill paid without incident.

Recommendations:

Although the event overall went very smoothly and participants and organizers were pleased with the conference outcome, there is still room for improvement, especially where communication between the RCI staff, Stability Pact staff, and BC Serdon is concerned. In general, BC Serdon needs to double-check all information received from SPTWG representatives to make sure it is accurate and timely, and to maintain direct contact with conference participants to make sure everything runs smoothly.