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Dear friends and colleagues:

The Regional Competitiveness Initiative (RCI) is convening the Third Regional Conference on Competitiveness, to be held in Sofia, Bulgaria, on June 8 – 10, 2005, at the Radisson Hotel. We have two objectives we hope to achieve with this conference, and the agenda is structured so as to help achieve those objectives.

There are now many projects in the E&E Region that deal with competitiveness programs in one form or another. Our first objective is to launch a process by which missions, projects, and businesses in the region can learn from each other how competitiveness activities can best achieve favorable results.

Our second objective is to identify an initial group of product sectors and programmatic themes that are of interest to at least a few of the projects in the region, and to launch collaborative efforts among the projects on those themes. The four sectors and themes to be highlighted in this conference are: agricultural marketing, information technology, regional tourism, and cross-border trade facilitation.

In keeping with our first objective, we want to maximize the participation by mission and project personnel. This is not a conference of “outside experts”, but rather a forum by which those who are engaged directly in the design and implementation of competitiveness activities are able to exchange opinions and experiences with their counterparts in other countries. We would like for you to review the attached draft agenda and provide us with comments and feedback by means of the attached survey.

We are hoping to have an attendance of about 60 – 80 people, with a good cross section of representation from missions, projects, and businesses and governmental organizations that are participating in the implementation of competitiveness projects. RCI will pay for the costs of the conference in Sofia, and attendees will be responsible for their own travel and hotel costs. In order to expand private sector participation, we may be willing to share some of the costs of bringing private sector representatives from key entities in the region.

We hope you will take the time to provide us with the information we need to make this conference a productive experience for all of the attendees. We look forward to seeing you and your colleagues in Sofia.

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