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**HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE
OF THE MINISTRIES OF JUSTICE AND
OF THE INTERIOR**

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**IMPROVING EUROPEAN CO-OPERATION
IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE FIELD**

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Honourable ladies and gentlemen!

Honourable Chair!

Dear colleagues!

It is my special honour and my privilege to address you at this eminent meeting. First, allow me to extend my sincerest gratitude and appreciation to the Government and the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation and to the Council of Europe for the organisation of this immensely successful Conference which has served as a forum for debate of significant issues in the area of judicial cooperation in criminal affairs.

The Republic of Macedonia has regretfully not remained immune to the growing phenomenon of transnational forms of crime and therefore undertakes actions for further implementation of measures directed towards achieving a more efficient and joint combat against the various forms of crime. In that respect, **the legal framework for international legal assistance in the Republic of Macedonia consists of: the national criminal legislature, the bilateral agreements for international legal assistance** which the Republic of Macedonia has concluded with many countries such as: Croatia, Slovenia, Albania, Turkey, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Romania, Monte Negro and UNMIK and is the process of negotiation with the Russian Federation and Italy and **the ratified international conventions** in this are (which form an integral part to the rule of law) such as the European Convention and the additional protocols for Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, the European Convention and the Additional Protocols to the Convention on Extradition, the European Convention on the

Suppression of Terrorism, the Convention and the Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons, Criminal Law Convention and additional protocol on Corruption, etc.

Allow me to inform you that in the Republic of Macedonia the procedure for providing international legal assistance and the procedure for execution of international agreements in the criminal legal field as well as **the transfer and the extradition of the accused or of the convicted persons** are regulated in the national legislature through the significant amendments and addendums introduces in the Law on Criminal Procedure in 2004 which allow for the modernisation of the legal frame in the mentioned areas.

In the process of formulation of this law, specific and maximum attention was devoted to the principle of providing widest possible international legal assistance among the participating states.

These principles could be summarized in the following manner:

1. International legal assistance, apart from the principles of the Law on Criminal procedure in the Republic of Macedonia is also carried out with the implementation of the European Convention for mutual assistance in criminal matters and its protocols, the UN Convention on the fight against transnational crime and its protocols and with the other ratified international agreements ;

2. The requests for legal assistance in criminal matters to and from the courts in the Republic of Macedonia can be forwarded in three ways: through diplomatic ways, through the Ministry of Justice or directly to the responsible court which is the novelty we have introduced in order to make these procedures speedier,

3. The legal assistance is generally comprised of: undertaking of specific actions in the criminal procedure such as: investigative acts which include Temporary securing and confiscation of objects and property which are connected to the criminal act, effective protection of witnesses, Justice collaborators and victims, confiscation of objects, delivery of written and court orders, hearing of accused persons, witnesses and experts and delivery of information from the criminal law archive. In that manner, the court to which the plead has been delivered decides according to domestic procedures for the admissibility and the manner of execution of the action which is the subject to the pleading of the foreign court.

Hence, in order to ensure speedy, effective, flexible and timely realization of the requests for mutual legal assistance delivered to the competent authorities in the Republic of Macedonia, the amendments and addendums to the Law on Criminal procedure have allowed for significant progress – with the introduction of the possibility for direct communication between the competent courts

of the Republic of Macedonia and the foreign bodies (provided in article 522 of the Law).

In the case of emergencies, when mutual assistance is provided for, the pleads for legal assistance can be delivered through the Ministry of the interior that will direct the pleading for legal assistance to the foreign body to the Ministry of Justice which will then on deliver the request to the competent court.

These are in short the **key directions within whose framework the Republic of Macedonia embarks upon** continuous activities aimed to strengthen the judicial cooperation in criminal matters particularly following the gaining of the candidate country status in November 2005 for full EU membership in the near future.

HONORABLE LADIES AND GENTLEMENT!

Finally, allow me once again to salute you and to avail my appreciation for the efforts embarked upon by the Council of Europe and to express my support for the constructive and concrete proposals that were mentioned by my colleagues in the course of this forum directed towards the improvement of our common fight against the different forms of crime.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!