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Thank you, Mr Chairman

I would like to make a short intervention about political dimension of our transbalkan legal cooperation.

First of all, allow me to thank the Research Center of Business Law and Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences for their idea to organize this meeting and their invitation for taking part in the 1st Conference on the Transbalkan Legal Cooperation.

My gratitude equally goes to Professor Kefalas, Director of the Research Center, as a real promoter of our gathering, since his initiative and energy have brought us together in our search for formulation and implementation of basis for our future cooperation.

I would like to draw your attention to the legal cooperation among Balkan lawyers as a part of overall cooperation in the region. I find this idea attractive and very useful, due to the evident necessity for such cooperation among Balkan countries, as well as real possibilities of its realization.

Legal cooperation in various fields of life and economy, may represent important element in the overall relationship of neighbouring countries and countries in the region. Achievements in our national legislations and our legal practice are offering many examples to study, compare and analyze, in order to find best solutions in our common action.

The work we are starting today could objectively contribute to the better legal understanding among our lawyers, to join studies on this issue and concrete inter-Balkan investment projects.

The framework of our regional legal cooperation is interesting from different points of view. May I remind you that we are all in the area of Civil Law, traditionally linked to Roman and Continental Law, although each of us has given to that common heritage national specifics, deriving out of local customs. Differences in level of development of contemporary Balkan states of their recent and present different experiences with other and broader regional associations, beyond the Balkan area, are not necessarily obstacles for cooperation, but rather chance with much more possibilities to offer in terms of substance and legal form. Don't forget that membership of our host country in the European Union is the biggest advantage for all us from other Balkan countries, and that it can help our own orientation towards Europe and the European Union. In our legal area, this is a chance to

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develop legal institutions in common way and contribute to our integration into modern European Law.

On the other hand, general political cooperation in the Balkan region, namely good relations of our Parliaments, political parties, governments, social organizations and associations in serious guarantee for successful legal cooperation, including that on foreign investments. In this respect, measures and preventive activities aimed at establishing a zone of stability, peace and cooperation in the Balkans by the year 2000 is a precious initiative already being developed, and it will substantially help our transbalkan legal cooperation.

That is why we are perfectly aware that legal cooperation is not separate and independent topic, without a natural connection with economy in respective countries, or with complete social environment in certain milieu. We know how much Law depends on different elements of modern state, for instance, and to what extent the political context is important in the case of foreign investments. The question of legal cooperation cannot be discussed without a larger approach and socio-political considerations. Political stability and existence of regional risk for business are among the first to be involved in our deliberations, if we really want to clarify all necessary conditions for successful and fruitful legal cooperation.

Unfortunately, our Balkan region is still suffering from political instability, mostly because of the civil war in Bosnia and existence of UN sanctions in Yugoslavia. The sanctions imposed against FR of Yugoslavia are the basic limiting factor for economic development and cooperation in the Balkans. The sanctions have interrupted positive trends in the developments of multilateral and bilateral cooperation in the Balkans, and the process of integration of the Balkans with the other parts of Europe. The damage caused by the sanctions deepened and widened the economic gap between the Balkan and Europe, heightened social tensions in each country and threatened to destabilize both the Balkans and South-East Europe in long run. Let us hope that long expected peace will come soon, and unjustified sanctions be lifted, so that basic conditions for economic and legal cooperation in Balkan be improved.

Dear Colleagues,

I am confident that three days' discussion about different aspects of our legal cooperation will enable us to come to concrete conclusions. We all have the feeling about usefulness of our meeting and how much this exchange of views can contribute to our personal legal knowledge and our role in development and respect of the Law system. It will increase our wish and responsibility to build the real Balkan legal cooperation.

Consequently, I am really coming to conclusion that such a gathering should be repeated next year or in two years, as the Second Conference on the Transbalkan Legal Cooperation, which will be held in one of Balkan countries. Next conference

could be more specialized in the terms of discussed topics or profiles of invited lawyers, as a follow-up of this, more general, conference. It is also possible to foresee smaller specialized Balkan meetings, held in different countries, which should precede the next Conference. The idea can be further elaborated, it is important to keep it alive, with different modalities aimed at developing and promoting of Balkan legal cooperation.



