

Prime Minister, Ministers, Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first say that I am very pleased to be here today, and thank Director Naim Rashiti so much for hosting this discussion. I believe that the Balkans Group has produced a very good and useful status report on the European Reform Agenda and submitted constructive recommendations.

I think we all agree that the European Reform Agenda and the Stabilization and Association Agreement, are two very important drivers for reform and progress in Kosovo. These drivers have a positive impact on good governance and the rule of law, as well as the functioning of markets and the economy.

I trust that the Government will make strong efforts to catch up on some delayed measures in the European Reform Agenda. Strong coordination and a consistent push from the top - by the Prime Minister and key ministers – is a crucial factor to ensure success.

There are several lessons learned from many years of work to promote the rule of law and good governance. Let me very briefly point to six of them here today:

1. Maximum openness and transparency in public institutions
2. Strong and independent watch-dogs and institutions
3. Strong and responsible media
4. Strong interagency coordination
5. Public administration reform based on the principles of merit and accountability
6. Strong implementation of legislation in all areas

Norwegian efforts in Kosovo is complementary to EU efforts. We share the same values and objectives. We try to contribute in areas where we can be a value-added. We will continue to coordinate with the EU Office, and provide support in line with Kosovo priorities.

Regarding rule of law and good governance, our main focus the last year has been on efficiency and transparency in the court- and prosecution services, as well as access to justice. The CMIS project – providing a new electronic case-handling system for the justice sector – is a milestone. We hope to engage in additional areas in 2018, when we will build up a new project portfolio.

It is being said, that in a strongly globalized world, the choice is between modernization and stagnation.

Modernization means change, which sometimes may be difficult. There will always be some groups in society that do not embrace change. Some people may be afraid of losing privileges, of increased competition or of demanding business rules. Some of these fears may be understandable – but it is still necessary for politicians to make the hard decisions and show the way, to the great benefit of the whole society in the long run.

Also for my country – Norway - integrating with the EU (as an associated member in many areas), has been a modernization project, with a very positive impact on business and the economy.

Let me, finally, mention that we are now discussing with Minister Hoxha and her Ministry the establishing of a Fund for capacity- and competence building in Kosovo government administration, to facilitate the implementation of the SAA Agreement. We can also share lessons learned from our close cooperation with the

EU for many years. Norway's commitment in Kosovo is long-term. Western Balkans will remain a priority region in many years to come.

Thank you for your attention!