Respected deputy prime minister, Besnik Beslimi,

Respected Colin Ellis,

Respected, Kosmas Vamvalis and Arian Zeka,

Respected chairs of the panel,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I see here today we have mixed audience, government representatives and business, and its perfect for raising the two questions I have, that are part rhetorical and in part I will try to make my fair effort to address.

The first one is - Tell me an industry that you can start talking about developing, without the lack of working force being raised as an issue in the discussion?

And the second one – how we can maintain growth and sustainability in small and fragile economies of Western Balkans.

(pause)

So, as I was thinking about the sub-topic of this panel - Investing for inclusive and sustainable growth my mind got scattered to as many possibilities and opportunities there are, but none of those were possible without people. People that share the same believe and optimism of getting over this crisis with inclusiveness and justness.

To address the topic of this panel – How should we develop towards sustainable growth – it must be towards gaining back the trust that - Hard work pays off, responsibility is rewarded, and anyone could make it if they tried – no matter who you were, no matter where you came from, no matter how you started. And it must be right away! Moreover, we in Balkans have in our DNA to work hard and contribute not only for ourselves and our family but also for the entire humanity through personalities such as Mother Teresa, Nicola Tesla, Ferid Murati etc.

Faster steps towards reaching the stage of doing business based on fair play, a fair shot and a fair share will require all of us to see that we have a stake in each other’s success. And it will require that we all take responsibility, and that, will obtain sustainability.

For this we need the joint forces of the powerful triple helix – Government, business, and people.

Both our countries are similar in many ways, and now I believe we should be fighting for our people and open the debate about what businesses and government are doing for them, and not just as political rhetoric. The debate between the three parties should be - of the best way to restore trust, restore growth, to restore prosperity, and fairness. And the bottom line, that will perpetuate us all forward and upward… restore solidarity.

And oh, how we got reminded of solidarity in the hard way for the past three years.

Thus, we as social democratic governments need to restore the middle class. We need to restore the belief in the intrinsic value and integrity of workers. This is a defining issue of our time. This is the make-or-break moment for the middle class and the developing force for our sustainable growth.

And both our social democratic governments should take the pledge in doing so.

The key towards developing the middle class and in the same time the labor market, is bridging the gap between the old and new qualifications that the labor market is hungry for.

Both our countries are coming out of a system that was not supportive of requalification or fast paced change, as we have now. So, we need to work together, government and business into building people.

We should be giving people the chance to get new skills and training so that they can learn to make high-powered batteries, mechatronics… We should invest time and money into developing their potential, by giving them resources, time, and the opportunity to do so.

This cannot be done by Governments alone. This has to be a joint effort, because it’s of joint interest… and if you ask me of joint importance and value.

The workforce is the bloodstream of the economy, and you can’t grow if you cut your lifeblood – and that is the skills and experience that the work force delivers.

Let’s build on that.

And the second topic that I raised in the beginning was about how we can maintain growth and sustainability in small and fragile economies of western Balkans.

I think, first and foremost we need change in the strategy of the game that we are playing, the shift form dependencies of each other on different resources towards creating strong bonds of interdependencies. This new approach will create higher growth, more innovations, and a stable region.

Therefore, this will bring us to another stadium of economic development since we will not compete between us in every industry or sector, but it will drive us to work together and be more competitive as a region.

Based on the global shifts in the new economic era the fastest way that we can jointly work and bring value for our countries is through creating joint platform for attracting FDI’s with similar packages of support and bring the whole value chain from the far East to our region. And instead of competing among us who will get the investor lets change our approach, we seek for value chain as a whole to bring here and not only one single company that will employ 1000 workers.

Near shouring is eminent

Ladies and gentlemen, the key towards sustainability and growth of our economies is through building trust, first of our citizens in the government and business and the second is building trust between our countries. We go up or we go down. But we go together.

That is why, we should work together for an economy where both businesses and workers can and should win!

Thank you.