

**ADDRESS BY  
THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL  
OF MINISTERS OF BOSNIA AND  
HERZEGOVINA**

EBRD 2019 Annual Meeting in Sarajevo

**Opening Ceremony: Great Hall**  
**of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Date and Time: 8 May, 09:30-10:30

Your esteemed Excellencies (Presidents),  
Right Honourable Prime Ministers,  
Esteemed President Chakrabarti, dear Suma,  
Your Excellencies,

On my own behalf and on behalf of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina I wish you a warm-hearted welcome to our beautiful state of Bosnia and Herzegovina and our capital city of Sarajevo.

Welcome to the land of exceptional natural resources, industrious and talented people and successful managers. A country and a city that you will quite certainly find enjoyable for its beauty and the hospitality of its inhabitants, and furthermore as a familiar place for the exchange of inventive ideas and attractive investment projects and the numerous business opportunities that will be presented to you during this conference.

It is my exceptional pleasure and it fills me with personal pride that Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sarajevo are the hosts of this major event.

This is why I wish to express profound gratitude to the President of the EBRD, Mr Chakrabarti, dear Suma, on his personal engagement and the great support he has given Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Council of Ministers in all the undertakings that led to the achievement of this major and important event, not only for Bosnia and Herzegovina, but for the entire region of the Western Balkans.

At more than forty different sessions that will be organised over the next couple of days, we will exchange valuable experiences, knowledge, and skills with our esteemed guests, distinguished and proven managers, business people, bankers, financial experts, those who have been and continue to be the creators, captains and implementors of successful ideas, projects and companies.

We will talk about the best models for developing the economy in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region of the Western Balkans, the reforms that are required in order to create positive entrepreneurial climates and develop the business environment, best practices that will result in fostering the competitiveness of the industrial sector, encourage domestic and attract foreign investors, the individual and regional capacities of our natural and human resources, our economic and investment potential, and the measures and further directions for action with the objective of resolving the key macroeconomic problem of the entire region – this being the question of creating new jobs for the young in order to keep them living and working in their homeland of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in fact – in the entire region, which, particularly in the economic sense, we wish to integrate and build.

For all of the above reasons, during the past four years, the determination of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina has in fact been focused on the adoption of the

European economic and legal acquis, sustainable economic development, and the stability and prosperity of our country.

I am pleased to be able to say today that Bosnia and Herzegovina has achieved very significant progress and that some of our economic parameters show continued and positive economic growth and development, an improvement of the overall economic situation in our country and increased quality and competitiveness of Bosnia and Herzegovina's products and the overall economy of Bosnian and Herzegovina.

GDP growth, as in the preceding several years, exceeded 3 per cent in 2018 as well, and this trend also continues into 2019, while in 2018 the scope of Bosnia and Herzegovina's foreign trade for the first time approached the sum of 32 billion KM /Convertible Marka/, and we have continued growth of exports, which is the key indicator of economic development, and in this we are among the leading states in the Western Balkans.

Our most significant foreign trade partner is the EU, to which we export more than 73 per cent of our products, while the most important foreign trade partners and key export markets are Germany, Italy, Austria, Slovenia, Serbia, Croatia and Turkey. In 2018 Bosnia and Herzegovina had a record 800 million KM direct foreign investment, which is an increase of some 50 per cent over the year before, and what is most important for us is the fact that this growth trend also continues in 2019, which shows that the numerous reforms we have implemented – and those on whose implementation we continue to work – have yielded results, and Bosnia and Herzegovina is becoming a very attractive destination for foreign investors from the region, the EU and the entire world.

I am especially pleased that the EBRD has invested cumulatively more than EUR 2.3 billion in Bosnia and Herzegovina, into more than 160 different projects, of which 82 per cent are investments in infrastructure, in particular the Trans-European Corridor Vc, in which the EBRD has invested EUR 550 million so far. In 2018 the EBRD invested EUR 200 million in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is a significant increase over the EUR 130 million in 2017. I anticipate there will be further expansion and that these investments will exceed EUR 300 million in 2019, and not just in the infrastructure sector, but also in strengthening the private sector and the development of small and medium enterprises, energy efficiency and the green economy.

Of course, it is our responsibility and our firm commitment that we will continue with economic and social reforms, the development of the business environment, strengthening the rule of law and continue to stabilise political and civic circumstances, because we believe these to be the key preconditions for future economic development.

We will continue to work to make Bosnia and Herzegovina a competitive and desirable destination. The results so far are visible, such as, for example, in the World Bank analysis in which Bosnia and Herzegovina was singled out as the state with the largest registered decline of unemployment in the region last year, with the service sector registering the highest number of new jobs.

Thus, the results are visible and things are proceeding in a positive direction, but we cannot say that we are completely satisfied. We must continue with reforms; we must work even more to make our state a place of pleasant living and profitable business. Yet we cannot do this alone – we need investments, particularly in the sectors that have great potential, we need

a regional investment platform, rapid development and the integration of new technologies; and we need to develop the transportation, energy and digital infrastructure.

In all our plans, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has been and remains one of the key pillars and a continuing partner for the future in building a stable and economically prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Yet, these are topics that we will discuss separately at the investment session to be held tomorrow, at which we will call on all investors in attendance and explain the reasons why they should invest in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I wish all of you good luck in your work, with sincere wishes for the success of the numerous meetings and events today and tomorrow and I hope that they will contribute to our shared objective – which is the strengthening of the economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the economies in our region.

I wish you all a pleasant and enjoyable stay in our beautiful country. I hope you will find time to enjoy the attractions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the unique cultural and historical heritage and the beauties of Sarajevo.

Finally, I invite you to attend the investment session of the host state of Bosnia and Herzegovina that will take place tomorrow in this auditorium commencing at 09.30, where we will present the investment opportunities of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

And to conclude, once again I wish to express my gratitude for the constructive cooperation and strong engagement of the EBRD in Bosnia and Herzegovina, through which a number of important infrastructure and other projects of great significance for economic renewal and the development of Bosnia and Herzegovina have been implemented.

This is why it is my honour and satisfaction to open the EBRD 2019 Annual Meeting in Sarajevo on behalf of Bosnia and Herzegovina as the host state.

I wish you all the best.