

FRANCOPHONE ECONOMIC FORUM HELD IN TIRANA

Lyon Investors Explore Opportunities

"It is a pleasure for me to be with businessmen from Lyon known as the engine of the economic development of France at a time when there is a bilateral will to take our economic and trade relations forward," Albania's Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Ditmir Bushati said in the Forum

TIRANA - "Albania offers many attractive areas in economy and tourism for foreign investors and I am pleased that Albanian and French business communities are in the same tune for a fruitful co-operation," has said Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Ditmir Bushati.

Mr. Bushati made that comment in the opening remarks at the Francophone Economic Forum, which was held in Tirana on March 9 this year with the participation of a large business delegation of the region of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, with Lyon as its center, which was made up of 60 entrepreneurs, and Albanian authorities, business representatives and other invitees.

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of the compatibility of our laws with those of the EU, but on top of all business representatives require guarantees that the contracts and agreements expected to be signed will be interpreted in a fair way in compliance with the European right by the Albanian courts," he said, adding that Albania had the support of the relevant French institutions, which is a guarantee for the investors to see Albania as a secure country.

Further on, Mr. Bushati said Albania had some advantages as compared to the other Western Balkan countries in such fields like tourism, manufacturing, infrastructure, agriculture and rural development were the country is very open not only to welcome French investments but also

a bilateral will to take our economic and trade relations forward," he told the audience.

France is ranked the eighth as Albania's trade partner, far behind from Italy, which has a major place being the source of one-third of Albanian imports. China and Turkey are also very active in this market. Nevertheless, as it was said in the Forum, the French exports to Albania have maintained a progressive growth of 10 to 15 percent as compared to 2010 while the French imports from Albania have almost doubled since that year. In the meantime, some well known French companies are present in Albanian market and mention can be made of such worldwide outstanding trademarks like Yves Rocher, L'Oreal, Garnier, L'Occitane, automobiles under the Peugeot, Renault, Citroën brands and dairy products of Président trademark are sold in this market. It is significant the operation of Transavia Airlines, Air France KLM Group's low-cost carrier, which inaugurated a route between Paris and Tirana on 2 July 2015.

"We are not only interested to see positively the relations

with France, but they are important at this state formation stage which Albania is passing through," said the Albanian Minister. "We are in a crucial process as far as the European integration is concerned, and we believe that 2018 will be the year when a decision will be made by the EU to launch the difficult and challenging accession negotiations. Of course, it will be a long process having demands and

challenges but it will create opportunities to work together in order to take forward the democratic process in the country, including the economic aspect."

Mr. Bushati took the opportunity to thank the French government, the institutions of that friendly country for the support to this process politically and in other assistance forms, and he thought that business should play an im-

portant role in such a difficult process.

He spoke of the importance for the creation of fair business like environment for the foreign businesses and in the first place for the French ones to come to Albania and make what he called a success story due to their investments

"We are in the process of improving the rule of law and every business is interested to understand not only the level

to cooperate with state authorities or with the Business Club. "Our task is to facilitate as much as possible the work of those investors, especially of those serious investors wishing to be present in the Albanian market."

He noted that the population of the Western Balkans countries is less than 20 million inhabitants as compared, for example, with Romania and it is considered as a small market. But, according to him, the latest developments, in

AWARDS FOR ENTREPRENEURS ROCHE, LAVENTURE, FERİ

At the end of the Francophone Economic Forum proceedings, awards were distributed to some entrepreneurs among whom an award under the motivation "Successful French entrepreneur in Albania, Commerce and Industry" was given to Mr. Julien Roche, President of the France-Albania Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Another award went to Ludovic Laventure and Bora Feri, for achievements regarding applications of electronic and cell phone payments.



Mr Julien Roche receiving the award