

Honourable Minister Shala,
Honourable Chairman of the CBK Board, Mr Mrasori,
Honourable Deputy Governor,
Representatives of Financial Institutions,
Honourable participants, ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased that today we are all together marking the World Consumer Rights Day, which is now transformed into an annual activity for the Central Bank of the Republic of Kosovo. The special feature of today's organization is that this is happening within the activities of marking the 20th anniversary of the establishment of CBK, so we are in a good moment to reflect on the development of Kosovo's financial system over these 20 years and our orientation for the development of this sector in the future.

Kosovo started developing the financial system in 1999, at a time when everything had to be developed from the outset. The first years of CBK's operation were mainly related to the construction of the basic infrastructure necessary for the functioning of the financial system, starting from the regulatory and supervisory framework, the payment system and so on. Over time, together with the highly valued support from our international partners, CBK managed to advance its capacities at the same level with the central banks of countries with a longer tradition of the financial system.

CBK went through different development stages, and so did the financial institutions operating in Kosovo. The first years of their operation were quite challenging, because they operated in an environment of high uncertainty and significant lack of information. Nevertheless, the improvements made in the

financial infrastructure and in the overall business environment in Kosovo, together with the growth of maturity of financial institutions and CBK during these 20 years, have resulted in a modern and sound financial system that is successfully implementing its role of financial intermediation in support of the sustainable development of the country's economy. Nowadays, our financial system is generally characterized by steady growth of activity and a very satisfactory level of financial health indicators.

Whereas, in the first years of operation of the financial system, the focus was on creating the conditions for providing basic financial services for the country's economy, now we have reached a level where more attention is given to the quality of these services, where undoubtedly, activities aiming consumer protection of financial services occupy a very important place. For us, consumer protection activities represent a daily task that we exercise with the utmost seriousness, and this day will be used as an opportunity to make a general reflection on these activities.

Consumer protection is not a single action, but an entire process that promotes responsible behaviour of financial institutions by incorporating various aspects that, besides protecting the respect of contractual customer rights, also help customers in selecting adequate financial products and contribute to maintaining the solvency of customers.

Therefore, given the importance and complexity of consumer protection, CBK has organized consumer protection activities in two main pillars, consisting of consumer complaints and financial education.

By reviewing complaints, CBK intends to ensure the implementation of all contractual rights and obligations between financial institutions and customers, in

cases where customers consider that such a thing has never happened. In recent years, the number of financial institutions' customers lodging a complaint to CBK regarding the implementation of their contractual rights has increased. We consider that the increase of the number of complaints directly reflects the higher awareness of customers about the right and the possibility of complaining, which is contributing to the better protection of their rights, but it is also contributing to the rectifying and advancement of internal processes in financial institutions in providing and further developing financial services as well as avoiding various errors. Consumer complaints represent a very important source of information for CBK, which often takes them into account during the supervisory activities of financial institutions.

In addition to activities to address possible violations by financial institutions in relation to consumer rights, CBK is working intensively on financial education of the public, which aims to increase the level of public knowledge about financial products and their rights in relation to the financial institution. Also, in addition to its activities in promoting financial education, CBK continuously encourages financial institutions to increase their activity in support of increasing public knowledge about financial products, as well-informed customers take reasonable action and contribute directly to further development and maintenance of financial stability.

CBK also gives its contribution to consumer protection as a member of the Consumer Protection Council, an inter-institutional body that aims to provide a harmonized and comprehensive approach to ensure consumer rights protection in Kosovo. The establishment and functionalization of this council indicates the orientation of the institutions of the Republic of Kosovo, which have put consumer protection at the top of their priorities.

At the conclusion of my speech, I would like to emphasize our commitment in ensuring a financial system to the country's economy, which contributes in the best way possible to the economic development of the country and, at the same time, conducts the financial intermediation activity while respecting all legal and regulatory provisions.