

**STATEMENT of the
Republic of Serbia
at the Twentieth session of the General Conference
of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization**

Vienna, 27 November–1 December 2023

Mister President, Your Excellencies, Director General, Honorable Heads and Members of Delegations, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honor and pleasure to have this opportunity to address you at the annual United Nations Industrial Development Organization General Conference, on behalf of Serbian Government and the Ministry of Economy.

First of all, I would like to thank the organizers for such a significant and useful forum, which I believe will contribute in a multitude of ways to overcoming challenges and finding effective and innovative solutions for sustainable recovery in the coming years.

The Republic of Serbia strongly supports multilateralism and the principles contained in the UN Charter, which are gaining additional importance in the face of new and increasingly complex challenges. We also provide active support to the activities of the UN and its specialized agencies in all priority areas of activity, bearing in mind that the unique situation in which the whole world found itself has shown that individual efforts of states are not enough and that global solidarity, cooperation and joint action are necessary.

The Republic of Serbia attaches great importance to the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals and is undertaking intensive activities at the national level in order to ensure the appropriate dynamics of their implementation. The Republic of Serbia believes that the continuous implementation of reforms, European integration, as well as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda present complementary and interpenetrating processes.

The COVID-19 pandemic, the energy crisis and global political turbulence have had a strong impact on the economy of the Republic of Serbia in previous years.

However, the Serbian economy is accelerating and, if it continues at the current pace of development, it can achieve the planned GDP growth in

2023, despite the significant slowdown of the European economy and especially the economies of the countries towards which we are most directed. In the second quarter of 2023, our economy recorded a growth of 1.7 percent, while in the same period the growth of the European Union economy was about 0.5 percent. The favorable trend from the second quarter continued in the second part of the year, in which growth amounted to 2.5 percent.

The construction and ICT sectors have been on the rise in the second quarter - the construction sector has achieved a growth of as much as 15.1 percent, while the ICT sector has marked a 10.1 percent growth.

When it comes to employment growth, the fact that Serbia has recorded a 2.3 percent increase in employment in the second quarter is particularly encouraging, so that the number of employed persons in Serbia currently amounts to 2,364,140, which is over half a million more than in 2014.

According to World Bank projections, GDP growth in 2023 should be 2.5%, which demonstrates that the Republic of Serbia is on the road to creating an economy which will be resistant to global challenges and is also on the path of transition to sustainable development.

As an upgrade of the current industrial policy, and in response to the challenges present within modern economy, the Government adopted the Industrial Policy Strategy from 2021 to 2030. Namely, the general goal of this strategy is increasing the degree of competitiveness our industry. We will do our best to achieve this through five specific goals, namely, digitalization, innovation, investment, export restructuring and the circular economy.

One of the special goals of the Industrial Policy Strategy is to increase the volume of investments into industry with the growth of investment quality. Through a series of activities, we will strive to encourage investment in high and medium technologies, in order to increase the added value of industrial products and promote investment. We invest effort into transforming the industry in the direction of innovative and technology-intensive sectors, while respecting the principles of sustainable development.

Digitalization, as the next special goal of our Strategy, should not be observed only as a transformation of the economy, but also of society as a whole. In the age of the fourth industrial revolution, digitalization manifests itself as a prerequisite for the survival of companies, on the global markets.

The application of modern technological solutions in today's economy is one of the basic instruments for raising the level of competitiveness, productivity and efficiency of the economy as a whole. In the field of digitalization, our activities will be aimed at raising awareness and strengthening the capacity in the industry through the promotion of digitalization, education programs, as well as incentives for companies which implement digital transformation.

Innovative solutions present a precondition for the transformation of the industry from a linear to a circular model, as another special goal of the strategy, whereby digitalization and the circular economy should jointly contribute to the creation of a competitive economy and a climate-neutral society. The circular economy, as a model of sustainable development, must be very carefully coordinated, since it includes a wide range of relevant participants and is connected with all areas of industry. In the long run, investments into green projects will have a positive impact on competitiveness and economic growth, through the creation of new jobs and increased exports in the areas of medium and high technologies.

In the hope that we will be able to overcome all the challenges of the current global situation with joint efforts and creative ideas, and at the same time provide a sustainable recovery for our economies, I would like to thank you for your attention and wish you successful work.