STATEMENT
by Mr. Andrei GALBUR, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova at the
Conference on the Blue Economy of the Black Sea - Towards better integration
(Odessa, 14 June 2016)

Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to the European Commission and the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the invitation to take part in this event.

The fact that this is the 3rd high level meeting of Stakeholders dedicated to the Blue Economy in this region - is clear testimony to the fact that this initiative may become a long-term platform for dialogue and cooperation among all interested parties from the Black Sea basin and surrounding areas.

The numerous challenges and problems, such as climate change, economic crises and social upheavals, regrettable deteriorating relations between former neighbors and partners in our wider region – should not stop us from striving to achieve through joint, concerted efforts – a higher level of synergy in our economic interaction and mutually advantageous cooperation in all key areas, in particular if we are to become a competitive zone in the modern global landscape.

Ladies and gentlemen,

While discussing the inherent opportunities of cooperation in the Black Sea Basin, we should not overlook the issue of integrating our transport networks, with the eventual goal of adjoining them to the greater European Union transportation framework.

In this sense, we should move from often outdated, uncompetitive connections to the practical application of the connectivity concept, which means prioritizing on the removal of various economic impediment and barriers, the final objective being the eventual assurance of unimpeded, secure, economically sound transport operations in the region, both for land and naval transport. This gradual evolution, should lead ideally to the development of a sustainable regional connectivity and integration of our region into the wider European market.

We should give credit where it is due. The EU is an uncontested leader in promoting interconnectivity. An example for this is the widening and extension of the map of the TEN-T networks, which allows capitalizing on the opportunities of increasing globalization of the economy and development of efficient infrastructure on the European continent.

I am glad that the Republic of Moldova has become an integral part of this dialogue as well. We sincerely hope to contribute to the evolution of the practical application of the connectivity concept, and interlink our infrastructure with our neighbors to the benefit of all participants. We also have great expectations that this initiative will trigger economic growth in the greater Black Sea region.

In this respect, the maritime ports are an integral part of the connectivity agenda. The Black Sea gateways are becoming increasingly important to the European single market while the horizontal priorities of the Motorways of the Sea should potentially provide increased volumes of trade to the Black Sea ports.

Of course, financial assistance is essential in implementing the connectivity in our region, in particular in helping to assure that the transport networks are sustainable both economically and environmentally. In this regard, we are counting greatly on EU and IFIs in contributing to the development of these projects.

Distinguished participants,

The Black Sea basin offers tremendous opportunities for economic development, taking into view its environmental, geographical diversity, but also the great array of important regional players and stakeholders.

The concepts of *"Blue Economy"* and *"Blue Growth"* have gradually become a familiar term in the states adjoining the Black Sea area, partially as a result of the efforts of the European Commission. The authorities of our states have to contribute towards stimulating the emergence of the blue economy, while identifying the suitable sectors that could benefit from this, in particular by promoting innovation, research and consolidating exchanges of good practices with their neighbors.

The threats emerging from climate change, water pollution and overfishing are just some of the numerous challenges that could potentially unify the efforts undertaken by various political and economic actors from all the countries of our region.

In this respect, we could follow EU's lead on promoting and implementing several blue economy technologies and know-how initiatives, in particular those related to renewable energy and clean shipping.

We also remain hopeful that more funds will be available to Black Sea basin countries through the Research Programme Horizon 2020, which is increasingly open to all the partners in the region.

And perhaps we should consider putting more effort into reviving the Black Sea synergy as well, which has been somewhat a rather dormant initiative as of late.

Distinguished participants,

Although the concepts of Blue Economy and Blue Growth encompass a very wide variety of possible initiatives, ideas and projects, I would like to take the liberty here and propose to perhaps concentrate our efforts on 2 or 3 fields or sectors, - initially by promoting pilot projects, and then – following an assessment of results – transpose them into reality.

One of these could be: - the development of tourism in our region, in particular given the rich cultural heritage of the countries in the Black Sea basin. We are all aware of the fact that the opportunities here are boundless. Of course, in order to attract tourists from all

over the world – we have to dedicate substantial efforts to improve the infrastructure and offer a large array of services and cultural routes. This in turn will help to diversify our economies and improve the overall economic climate.

Another priority could be cultural and educational exchanges in order to promote people-to-people contacts between the populations of our countries. This initiative would also be in line with the recommendations offered by the EU towards the development of our region and will also bring us closer together, while contributing to eliminating outdated stereotypes and foster increased interaction and cooperation, especially in times of crises and common challenges.

Dear friends,

In spite of the more recent visible centrifugal tendencies visible in our region, as well as thawing of old frozen conflicts, migration pressures, terrible acts of terrorism fueled by the violence in the Middle East, but also challenges of a political, social and economic nature, the Black Sea basin partner states have to remain unabated in their drive towards greater cooperation and constructive interaction and continue to work ceaselessly to achieve the desired stability and prosperity in our region.

I would like to wish all the participants of today's event to have a productive exchange of views, experience and know-how during the panel sessions, as well a concrete continuation of joint actions in various projects on the ground.

In conclusion, please allow me to once more congratulate our Ukrainian hosts and the European Commission for a well organized conference and express my sincere hope that this collective work will transpire into even greater partnership between all our countries in the years to come.

Thank you for your attention.