Distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends,

It is my great pleasure and honor to greet you on behalf of Bosnia and Herzegovina CEI Presidency and to wish you a very successful event, organized under the CEI Cooperation Activities.

As it is well known, CEI, throughout more than a quarter of a century of its existence, has been playing such an important role in enhancing cooperation within the region in many domains, among countries that belonged in the past to different political and social systems, as well as with various cultural heritage. As the consciousness that our states belong to the joint European family and share European values was getting steam, and the European integration process started to gain momentum, CEI has been transforming itself into the modern intergovernmental organization supporting this process by enabling vast exchange of views, best practices and lessons learnt, dealing with all current challenges modern world is facing, especially with those relevant to our Region.

Needless to say how important in strengthening of European integration processes is a strong cultural exchange. Central European Region has one of the world’s richest cultural heritage, settling diverse influences that were embroidered into the art and societies throughout many turbulent centuries.

Cultural exchange promotes, preserves and increases understanding, social cohesion through cultural expression of different ethnic groups. The better we recognize and respect those diversities, the more we increase our ability to create more prosperous, tolerant and harmonious global social environment.

As many times before, I think it is appropriate today to once again quote the Helsinki Final Act and its expression: “...cultural exchange and co-operation contribute to a better comprehension among people and among peoples, and thus promote a lasting understanding among states.”

CEI throughout its entire existence has never neglected cultural field of its activities, every year many music events, art exhibitions, movie festivals, seminars and symposiums have been organized. Through CEI Cooperation Fund, established in 2002, and funded by contributions of all CEI member states, almost 1000 Cooperation activities have been supported by delivering 9 million euros and accordingly mobilizing expenditures for 57 million euros. Almost one quarter of all these events have been cultural activities, meaning the most numerous. Just in the last three years among 200 activities supported by the Cooperation Fund, 48 are related to fine arts and other cultural subjects. Cultural part of CEI activities is one of the main pillars in this successful intergovernmental organization, recognizing its potential for further acceleration in the process of achieving better European unity, intra-connectivity, building confidence between peoples. No doubt, CEI will continue in the future to prove its commitment in cultural domain.

I am deeply convinced, that this event “CEI Music Higher Education Network” and establishment of the CEI Music Academies network, will represent a real milestone in our regional cultural cooperation bringing the intercultural exchange to the far higher level and confirming the social power of culture. It is so great to see that most of our CEI countries are represented here, and I congratulate you all for your dedication and commitment.
It is my great pleasure to say that our Ministry enthusiastically included this event into the Calendar of 2016 activities and let me express my gratitude to main organizers of such a great event, especially to the Conservatorio di musica Giuseppe Tartini from Trieste and I have to say with pride, two largest Music Academies from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Music Academy from Sarajevo and from my home town Banja Luka. Just to mention that Sarajevo Philharmonic Orchestra is approaching its hundredth anniversary (established 1923) of active contribution to our cultural arena, and Banja Luka Philharmonic that is very young, but at the same time very active and visible not only domestically but also at various international events.

Let me conclude by wishing you a very successful exchange of experiences, ideas and creation of the foundation for future rich and fruitful cooperation and joint activities.

I thank you for your attention.