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STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

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in response to the statement by the Secretary General of the BSEC

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to warmly welcome Ambassador Tvircun, the Secretary General of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) today at the Permanent Council meeting and thank him for his presentation. We have always valued the contribution of the BSEC to the deepening of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the region.

I would like to stress that the Republic of Azerbaijan is interested in making BSEC more result-oriented organization, which can timely and effectively respond to the challenges in the region.

Nowadays, comprehensive review process launched within the BSEC as a way to identify its strength, weakness, and opportunities in a complex and changing environment is very important. Azerbaijan supports the process of reforms in the BSEC.

Azerbaijan has been an active player in the region initiating, financing and implementing large-scale infrastructure projects and developing mutually beneficial economic and trade relations within the region, in such spheres as energy, transport, information and communication technologies, and others.

The initiatives and specific projects put forward by Azerbaijan have greatly facilitated regional cooperation. We have a very fruitful economic cooperation with most member-countries of the organization. Initiatives of Azerbaijan in general, are aimed at linking of Caspian, Black and Mediterranean seas and establishing regional cooperation within this wider region.

In particular, the implemented and ongoing projects in the energy and transport sectors have practically redrawn the region's energy and transportation map. The commissioning of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and of the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline brought extremely positive dynamic in the region. TANAP project become an important component of the Southern Gas Corridor. These are new projects and there are also following ideas that are in the pipeline that will significantly contribute to the energy security of Eurasian continent.

We also expect to complete another major project that is the commissioning of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway that will revive the ancient Silk Road. This project will link not only the three countries of the region that is Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey, but also, in a broader sense, the Asian and European continents. I am very pleased that together with our partners it is expected to be completed by the end of 2013. Importance of this project should be also considered in broader context of engagement of Afghanistan into regional cooperation. Railway line and international port to be built in Caspian will turn the region into multi-modal transportation hub, through which countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan, as well as other Asian partners may benefit from one of the shortest route to the western markets and develop their trade potential.

The existence of conflict with Armenia continues to be a major source of instability. Armenian's policy towards its neighbors is the major reason of the situation it found itself in term of regional cooperation and economic development. With this in mind, we believe that while setting up its priorities and defining future activities, BSEC should not overlook the existing and potential threats in the region. On the contrary, given the economic implications of the conflicts, BSEC should be able to address them timely and properly. There is no doubt that a just settlement of the conflicts on the basis of commonly recognized principles and norms of international law will open up completely new prospects for the development of international cooperation. We invite Armenia and broader OSCE community to think about such perspectives, which can be discussed either in BSEC or OSCE.

In conclusion, we wish you Mr. Secretary General every success in these very important activities.

Thank you.