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ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Permanent International Secretariat

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**STATEMENT BY
AMBASSADOR TEDO JAPARIDZE,
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE
ORGANIZATION OF THE
BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION (BSEC)
PERMANENT INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT**

**AT THE

TWELFTH MEETING OF THE
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

(Sofia, 6-7 December 2004)

**Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Thank you for the honor of permitting me to speak at the Twelfth Meeting of the Ministerial Council of the OSCE. I am privileged to warmly greet this auspicious forum and to share with you some of the achievements of BSEC and the prospects of our future cooperation. But first, I would like to express my gratitude to the Bulgarian Chairmanship and personally to the Chairman-in-Office H.E. Dr. Solomon Passy for a fruitful cooperation with BSEC during the Bulgarian Chairmanship. I also hold out the hope that the Slovenian Chair next year will continue the inveterate tradition of our partnership and close cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the past period of time the entire BSEC area has become an immediate neighbor of the EU. Hence, BSEC needs to respond to this new strategic map in ways that are appropriate to our objectives and charter. How does BSEC fit into this new strategic landscape? How does or should it connect to other structures and organizations with similar, related or parallel objectives and agendas? What role can BSEC play in helping to harness the forces of globalization that States seeking to build capacity must understand and accommodate? How to move closer to Europe, yet remain a positive factor for managing the strategic vectors that are shooting in on us from many other parts of the world? How, to put it succinctly, can BSEC function best as the representative of a strategic corridor in the midst of a changing world?

We are strongly confident that BSEC can continue building an effective cooperation with OSCE in all its dimensions, particularly in our common struggle against terrorism, trafficking and organized crime. We are closely following the ongoing reforms within OSCE and hold out hope that the reformed OSCE will be more effective and stronger and open to cooperation with other international organizations, including BSEC. We believe that in close cooperation with OSCE, BSEC can make its contribution to the strengthening of security architecture of Europe. Therefore, we would very much appreciate our participation in the work of the Annual Security Review Conference next year. We express hope that the Conference will give us a better insight into the security matters and furnish us with a grasp of how best achieve our common objectives.

We believe that BSEC, along with other international organizations and individual States, will even more actively engage in discussions of issues on all matters of regional security and stability. In this regard I would acknowledge the work accomplished within BSEC in the field of combating crime and terrorism.

I believe that BSEC should actively engage a range of different European economic, political and security structures as a way to becoming a key participant in the emerging new European architecture. We also need to use the huge potential, resources, and experience accumulated by the leading and developed countries of BSEC as they have undergone their own processes of changes resembling with our transformation. We need to keep the activities of BSEC open and transparent in order for others to participate in them.

I want to give special emphasis to the importance of the Special Meeting of the Council that took place in İstanbul on June 25, 2004, on the eve of the NATO Summit. At this meeting a “Statement on the BSEC Contribution to Security and Stability” was adopted. Having strongly condemned all acts of terrorism, this document once again reaffirmed that BSEC has joined the international community in promoting security and stability through economic cooperation.

The goal of BSEC has been and remains twofold. On the one hand, to develop the Black Sea area and activate its huge potential and resources, thus bringing it closer and integrating it into the various European Institutions that still perceive and look at the entire region as some sort of ‘grey zone’ or ‘black hole’ somewhere between the Wider Europe and the Greater Middle East. On the other hand, the second goal of BSEC has been and still would be of helping the newly independent States of the area move from transitioning from what they were to the more complex task of transformation, which is a state-building process, focused on what they will become. As such, BSEC has become an integral component of the multilateral international community. It has an ambitious agenda and ambitious goals for making this region prosperous and stable, to transform its political culture and the quality and habits of cooperation among regional actors.

In terms of BSEC’s original definition and its stated objectives, we continue to move forward smartly. It is amazing, as to how radically the strategic landscape has changed since BSEC was founded until today. In the broadest sense, the Black Sea region can no longer be considered in isolation of the larger dynamics that unfold around us. While once we were a collection of States - some new, some old - congregated around a large body of water, today the Black Sea region sits at the hinge of emerging strategic dynamics coming from all directions. Put differently, where once the Black Sea was part of a road to somewhere else, today it is a vital crossroad where things happening elsewhere intersect. BSEC’s membership, indeed, reflects these interesting intersections.

The Black Sea is a critical node in the strategies not simply of independent States that emerged from outworn Cold War configurations or of traditional littoral

countries like Turkey, Russia, Romania and Bulgaria. More to it, it is integral to the evolving policies and strategies of the States of the Eastern Mediterranean; to a new and vital Russia, which has such an important role to play throughout the region; to the larger South Caucasus; to the Greater Middle East; and, of course, to Europe. And it is obvious that where all of these dynamics converge, interest from the United States, now with a larger presence in the Middle East and Central Asia, cannot be far behind, if in fact it is not already far ahead.

I would like to emphasize that BSEC may serve as a model of cooperation, bringing together countries belonging to different cultures and varying historic experience, through cooperative activities bridging differences and developing common vision for the future of the region. It is a useful forum to elaborate new comprehensive security and stability framework for the region. This will help BSEC assert its place and role, together with OSCE in the new emerging European architecture.

In closing, I would like to once again thank the OSCE for inviting us to participate in its Ministerial Council and wish the Organization every success in its future endeavors.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
