



ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Permanent International Secretariat

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**STATEMENT BY
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ORGANIZATION OF THE
BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION (BSEC)
PERMANENT INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT (PERMIS)**

**AT THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL MEETING**

(Vienna, 14 February 2013)

Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,

I am honored to address the OSCE Permanent Council, on behalf of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). I want to sincerely thank the Ukrainian OSCE Chairmanship for this invitation and wish every success in your endeavors.

By a happy coincidence, in the first semester of this year, Ukraine holds, also, the Chairmanship-in-Office, in BSEC. In my view, making an allowance for the differences that exist between the two Organizations, in their scope and main objectives, both Ukrainian Chairmanships are inspired by the same vision, the same drive, the same plan, to transform our region into one of peace, stability and prosperity.

As His Excellency Mr. Leonid Kozhara has rightly said in his speech last month, “the OSCE remains an indispensable platform for an inclusive dialogue among equal partners” and “it offers unique advantages and opportunities that stem from its origin, geographic reach and its comprehensive concept of security”.

In BSEC, which is the oldest, most representative and institutionally mature regional economic organization in the wider Black Sea area, we have particularly noticed the emphasis given, in your priorities, to the challenges in the economic and environmental sphere and your willingness to explore ways in which OSCE can contribute in the development of new trade and transport corridors. We have also noted the priority given, by your Chairmanship, on combatting trafficking in human beings, an issue that has been, also, in our agenda in BSEC, for some time.

In BSEC, a regional economic Organization, we have also set as our objective to maximize the economic potential of the Black Sea region and create new opportunities for stronger economic cooperation. Our main pillars are inclusiveness, transparency and regional ownership. Our aim is to find new ways to promote regional economic integration and increase the potential of our Member States. Indeed, we share the view that economic cooperation is a necessary pillar for comprehensive and lasting security. And the effects of environmental degradation and climate change affect us all, across borders, and call for common initiatives and concerted action.

In BSEC, in order to make a concrete contribution to the lives of all the peoples in the wider Black Sea area, we aim to focus our activity on project implementation. At the end of the day, the success of BSEC, as of any other international organization, depends on the concreteness and effective implementation of common projects.

In this spirit, we continue the implementation of the Black Sea Ring Highway project and of the project on the development of the Motorways of the Sea, two BSEC projects of major significance, which are expected to facilitate intra-BSEC trade, as well as to foster tourism, infrastructure and transport investments.

The Black Sea Ring Highway is a 7.700 km, four lane ring highway system, to connect the BSEC Member States with each other. The project on the development of the Motorways of the Sea in the BSEC region, on the other hand, is about strengthening the maritime links among the ports of the BSEC Member States. We are, now, in the process of initiating a similar project in the railways sector.

Through these projects, we aim to contribute in linking European Road Networks to those of Asia. Most importantly, we aim to make a concrete difference in the lives of the peoples of the region and bring them closer together.

At the same time, through the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods we have achieved significant progress in facilitating commercial exchanges, with the active participation, in all stages of elaboration of our projects, of the transport unions in the region. In particular, through the BSEC Permit system, launched, in 2010, with the participation of seven Member States, BSEC has become the first regional organization to issue transit papers, thus facilitating the work of road transporters and decreasing time and costs linked to international trade between the participating countries.

Increasing commercial exchanges and investment promotion is a key area of BSEC cooperation. Currently, intra-BSEC trade and investment have not reached their full potential. In order to mend this situation, BSEC, among other initiatives, has been cooperating with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) within the framework of the Black Sea Trade and Investment Promotion Programme (BSTIP) - the first joint project between the two organizations. The project, which is co-financed by Greece, Turkey, the UNDP and BSEC, aims to develop trade and investment linkages among the BSEC Member States, with the direct participation of the business communities.

Given the fragility of the Black Sea environment, BSEC has also placed significant priority in the field of environmental protection. BSEC Member States are currently discussing the modalities of establishing an information exchange mechanism for environmental protection. There is also an ongoing study on the possibilities of strengthening cooperation with other organizations, institutions and partners on issues related to the protection and rehabilitation of the Black Sea marine environment. In this respect, I want to mention, in particular, the continued interest of the EU in programmes aiming to fight the degradation of the Black Sea.

Renewable Energy Resources and energy efficiency are closely linked to the objective of environmental protection. A Task Force on Green Energy is currently active in BSEC and the issues of energy efficiency are central to the activity of our Working Group on Energy. Supporting projects in these fields has been significantly enhanced since the activation of the BSEC-Hellenic Development Fund, which, together with the BSEC Project Development Fund, constitute the two financial instruments of the Organization

In energy cooperation, another main priority for BSEC is to ensure the stability and security of energy supplies by developing a BSEC regional energy strategy for 2020. BSEC is also committed to efforts towards ensuring the integration of the energy markets of BSEC and the EU by developing a regional energy market and encouraging cooperation with the Energy Community.

At the same time, BSEC is also active in, so called, “soft security” issues, trying to serve as a catalyst to ongoing activities on migration management and combating human trafficking. Together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) we are implementing a joint project on migration management, helping to formulate policy recommendations to prevent irregular migration flows and, simultaneously, facilitate legal ones. BSEC, together with the UNODC, has also launched a regional project on strengthening the criminal justice response to human trafficking in the Black Sea region. Finally, BSEC has initiated a number of agreements among its Member States on cooperation in combating organized crime and, in particular, to fight human trafficking, which is one of the most prevalent forms of organized crime in the Black Sea area.

Within this framework, a Regional Action Plan was jointly devised. Along with its policy development and capacity building aspects, the Action Plan gives special consideration to three basic elements in fighting human trafficking — namely, prevention, protection and prosecution.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ukraine has assumed the Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC as of the 1st of January 2013, for a term of six months ending on 30 June 2013. During this period, Ukraine envisages a comprehensive calendar of events, covering all BSEC areas of cooperation, including the ones mentioned above. It is certain, that the Ukrainian Chairmanship will make a positive and important contribution in the progress of regional cooperation in the wider Black Sea region.

Among the high level events, in addition to the Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, meetings of the Ministers of Economy, Transport and Interior are envisaged, which will provide political direction and renewed impetus to sector cooperation in the relevant BSEC areas of activity.

The priorities of the Ukrainian Chairmanship will constitute the roadmap for BSEC for the next six months. Building on the achievements already accomplished, the promotion and development of multilateral economic cooperation, the elimination of trade barriers and the harmonization of customs and trade regimes, the promotion of activities in transport and environmental protection, cultural cooperation and the strengthening of the Organization's financial ability to implement projects, will be our main priorities.

These tasks will be greatly facilitated by the on-going discussion on the Action Plan on the implementation of the BSEC Economic Agenda for the Future, the main policy document of BSEC. This discussion will be finalized within the BSEC sector Working Groups and the comprehensive Action Plan, which would provide BSEC with a clear set of attainable mid-term objectives, will be adopted by the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, at their next Meeting, in Kyiv, on 21 June 2013.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Participants,

I want to express my profound satisfaction over the excellent interaction between our two Organizations. In the past, we have worked together – and with the OECD – on the “Black Sea and Central Asia Outlook - BSECAO” project. We have worked together - and with the UNODC – on OSCE's Action Against Terrorism Prevention Branch. We are continuing to work closely together with the Office of Economic and Environmental Activities of the OSCE, through exchange of information on activities, as well as participation in events, in particular through OSCE's Economic and Environmental Forum process.

In BSEC, we see every reason in continuing and further enhancing this mutually beneficial cooperation, in the areas that are equally important to both Organizations. We are confident that our joint efforts and particular expertise will contribute to enhance prosperity and consolidate stability and security in the region, in the common interest of the Black Sea area, the Eurasian region and the international community.

Thank you.
