

Dear Editor,

I read with interest the last article of Chris Miller, published in the "War on the Rocks" E-magazine and introducing a new series in collaboration with the Foreign Policy Research Institute under the title "*Black Sea's Back*".

Mr. Miller believes that "*the failure of regional integration among Black Sea states is one key ingredient of the political balance*" (in the Black Sea region). "*Who today remembers the **Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation**, forged after the Cold War's end? Regional integration has been replaced by a zero-sum clash between Western and Russian integration schemes*".

First of all, I really appreciate that Mr. Miller "remembers" to mention the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Organization, even though he believes that it has fallen into complete oblivion.

Although Mr. Miller might have a point in what concerns the failure of *regional integration* in the Black Sea area, connecting this failure to the BSEC Organization is rather misplaced, since regional integration was never included among the objectives of this Organization. (You can find the Principles and Objectives of BSEC, as enshrined in its Statutory Documents, as well as other useful news concerning its activities, following the link <http://www.bsec-organization.org> By the way, the link to our Organization's website provided in Mr. Miller's article is erroneous).

Mr. Miller's view that today the BSEC Organization is completely forgotten does not reflect the actual situation: despite the well-known difficulties and issues, the BSEC Organization continues to actively pursue its aims and objectives, having established a wide and functioning web of cooperation-networks in many sectors, promoting the active coordination among its Member States in fields like Energy, Tourism, Transports, Trade, Science and Technology, Combating Organized Crime and many more.

Numerous conferences, workshops and seminars in all fields with distinct economic dimension have taken - and are taking - place, the BSEC Organization cooperates and coordinates its efforts with many International Organizations (especially with UN Agencies, the EU and others), many of which have entrusted our Organization with the implementation of concrete projects. The BSEC Organization is widely recognized as a point of reference in what concerns economic cooperation and coordination in the wider Black Sea region and is invited to participate in numerous events and efforts that are connected to the development of the region.

Surely, the biggest room of all is the “room for improvement” and this is exactly what the BSEC *Permanent International Secretariat* (PERMIS) and the Member States are striving for: to render the Organization more effective and project-oriented.

In a nutshell, the BSEC Organization, during its 26-year-long existence developed into the most significant, constructive tool for enhancing economic cooperation and coordination in the geostrategic region of the Black Sea.

In the mean-time it has evolved into a “family” with four more related, autonomous bodies, that cover cooperation issues in their respective field: the “*Parliamentary Assembly of BSEC*” (PABSEC) brings together many times during the year representatives of the National Parliaments of Member States, the “*Black Sea Trade and Development Bank*” (BSTDB) is funding development projects in all of the BSEC area (it was recently voted as the best regional Bank!), the “*International Centre for Black Sea Studies*” (ICBSS) serves as the valuable think-tank of the Organization and as an independent center dealing with regional issues and the “*BSEC Business Council*” (BSEC-BC), consisting of representatives of the business communities in BSEC Member States caters, to the latter’s particular interests.

The “added value” of all the above is that the BSEC Organization serves also as a useful, first level confidence-building-mechanism: the fact that many times during a year various representatives from all BSEC Member States sit around a table and discuss the promotion of numerous concrete cooperation projects in many sectors of public and private interest, has helped establish a distinct culture and atmosphere for dialogue and understanding among its Member States; this is an accomplishment that should not be underestimated or ignored.

As a small token of BSEC’s activities I attach herewith our “*News from the Black Sea*” letter, covering the last couple of months.

Hoping that I was able to convey some useful information for you and your readers in what concerns the “Black Sea that’s Back”,

Best regards,

Ambassador Michael B. Christides,

Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS.