

JOINT BAKY DECLARATION OF THE BSEC MINISTERS OF EDUCATION

We, Ministers of Education and/or Heads of Delegations of the Republic of Albania, Republic of Azerbaijan, Republic of Bulgaria, Georgia, Hellenic Republic, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Republic of Turkey and Ukraine, gathered in Baky, Azerbaijan, on 16 April 2004, within the framework of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation,

Having regard to:

- The Istanbul Decennial Summit Declaration adopted on 25 June 2002 in Istanbul;
- The Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education signed in Bologna, 19 June 1999;
- The BSEC Economic Agenda for the Future: Towards a More Consolidated, Effective and Viable BSEC Partnership, adopted by the Council of Minister of Foreign Affairs in Moscow on 27 April 2001;
- The relevant documents of the Council of Europe and UNESCO to which our countries are parties;
- The other relevant documents, principles, guidelines of the BSEC fora,

And bearing in mind that:

- A. The BSEC Member States have a great and promising potential in education as a tool to strengthen the effectiveness of production and services, and to raise the living standards in the respective countries and in the region as a whole;
- B. Education has a significant and complex role to play in the modernization and transformation of our economies into knowledge economies, and especially those in transition, our societies and our local communities;
- C. Education is an important factor contributing to deeper regional integration of our countries; furthermore, cooperation in the field of education should also actively contribute to developing the European area of education as well as to fostering our relations with the technologically and educationally advanced countries;
- D. Important progress has been achieved in promoting modern reforms in the fields of education, scientific research and technological development during the last decade by all BSEC Member States, thus creating a solid foundation for meaningful regional and international cooperation;

Agreed on the following principles and actions further to enhance cooperation in the fields of education and research in our region:

1. We confirm our commitment to closer cooperation in the future, on a bilateral and multilateral basis, in the fields of education and research. We strongly underline the importance of substantial actions in the field of education towards achieving the strategic goals laid down in the BSEC documents, specifically the BSEC Economic Agenda.
2. We are of the opinion that the development of cooperation in the field of education in the BSEC area needs to embrace our common vision of the BSEC cooperation as a part of the integration process in Europe which will lead to the compatibility of our education systems according to the targets of the Bologna Declaration.
3. We invite all the actors in this process – the Working Group on Cooperation in Science and Technology, the International Center for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS), the Council of the Presidents of the National Academies of Science of the BSEC Member States, the Black Sea Universities Network (BSUN) and all relevant BSEC centers and associations - to coordinate their efforts for the formulation of concrete projects and their implementation.
4. We take note of BSUN's activities in a positive manner and encourage it to further contribute to the BSEC process.
5. We recognize that access to appropriate funding is one of the most serious issues facing education and research institutions. The search for additional sources of financing, both domestic and international will continue to be in the focus of our future work. In particular the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank could be instrumental in financing commercially viable projects.
6. We believe that the recently launched BSEC Project Development Fund provides us with additional opportunities that need to be further explored and used for the initial funding of promising project ideas.
7. We decide to propose to the next meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs to entrust the task of cooperation in the field of education to the BSEC Working Group on Cooperation in Science and Technology and rename the latter as the BSEC Working Group on Cooperation in Science, Technology and Education .
8. We encourage exchanges of best practice and experience as well as mapping and evaluation of the research potential in the BSEC region and the setting up of a relevant database through the activities of the BSEC WG on Cooperation in Science, Technology [and Education], and of the ICBSS;
9. We commend the decision of the Government of Ukraine to take up the responsibility of the Country Coordinator of the Working Group on Cooperation in Science, Technology [and Education] and recommend the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs to adopt an appropriate resolution. Furthermore, we encourage the future Country

Coordinator to play a crucial role in the process of cooperation in this field and to prepare to that end a comprehensive two-year Action Plan.

10. Being aware that the development of high quality training programs is an important means to increase the efficiency in our investment for the future, we express our commitment to elaborate sustainable training programs for students and academic teaching staff, consistent with the goals and principles of regional and international cooperation as well as good neighborly relations.

11. Being conscious that information and communication technologies play a crucial role in ensuring quality education and create wider possibilities for efficient information and experience exchange between our countries, we invite the relevant BSEC bodies to contribute to the implementation of programs related to new technologies in education at regional and national level.

12. We shall concentrate our efforts on the exchange of information and experience on the recognition of university diplomas of our countries in order to facilitate the mobility of our students at regional and international scale.

13. We invite the international organizations and institutions, the European Commission and the other international fora to support the implementation of the BSEC actions on cooperation in education.

14. We invite the Organization of the BSEC to take into account this Declaration in the process of implementing the BSEC Economic Agenda.

15. We invite the relevant BSEC Working Group to review regularly, in the framework of its future Action Plan, the implementation of this Declaration;

16. We forward this Declaration to the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

17. We express our readiness to meet, whenever appropriate, to consider matters related to education cooperation in the BSEC region. The date and the venue of such meetings will be defined in cooperation with BSEC PERMIS.

18. We express our gratitude to the host country, BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office, the Republic of Azerbaijan, for the excellent arrangements and the hospitality extended to its participants.

Adopted in Baky, on 16 April 2004.