

**Declaration of the Ministers Responsible for Science and Technology of the BSEC
Member States**

Athens, 28 September 2005

We, the Ministers responsible for Science and Technology of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Member States – the Republic of Albania, the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Bulgaria, Georgia, the Hellenic Republic, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia and Montenegro, the Republic of Turkey, and Ukraine – met in Athens on 28 September 2005 to discuss opportunities for closer cooperation in the fields of scientific research and technological development and to formulate an agreed Action Plan at a regional level.

Recognising the importance of cooperative action in a regional framework to respond to the challenges of globalisation, increasing interdependence and the aims of sustainable and equitable development and to enhance the competitive performance of the BSEC Member States and of the region as a whole, consistent with the vision and goals of the BSEC *Economic Agenda for the Future*;

Acknowledging the ability of our countries to create, disseminate and utilise scientific and technical knowledge in order to secure steady economic growth, greater competitive power, larger employment opportunities and improved quality of life in accordance with the principles of sustainable development;

Emphasising the remarkable creative potential that exists in the BSEC Member States for the further advancement of science and technology and *being determined* to leverage that potential through thriving regional cooperation;

Guided by the Millennium Development Goals and taking into consideration the deliberations on that subject as well as the specific agreements and programmes in the field of science and technology developed under the aegis of the EU, UN and OSCE;

declare our commitment:

To strengthen regional cooperation in the fields of scientific research and technological development as a major driving force of dynamic and sustainable economic growth and prosperity for the peoples of the region;

To pursue an inclusive and comprehensive concept of collaboration in all fields of scientific endeavour, from earth, natural and life sciences to social sciences and humanities, while seeking to achieve a proper balance between fundamental, experimental and applied research;

To initiate agreed policies directed toward better utilisation of the existing human and material resources, research infrastructure and administrative capacities through improved access to knowledge, training activities and research programmes, enhanced cross-border mobility of scientists and regular exchanges of information and publications, bilateral and regional networking, attachments, fellowships and joint scientific events;

To develop an appropriate legal and regulatory environment at a national level, including competition rules and protection of intellectual property, in a manner that is likely to ensure mutual compatibility and to promote regional cooperation, while being consistent with accepted international and European standards and procedures;

To seek innovative ways for combining allocated public expenditure on research and development with private investment, including public-private partnerships for funding specific projects involving cross-border or region-wide cooperation and for disseminating relevant information about procedures for accessing other available financial resources (EU and UN programmes, IFIs, specialised foundations, etc);

To promote a dynamic dialogue among stakeholders in the science and technology community – research organisations, industry, user groups – in order to ensure their cost-effective and result-oriented interaction for the purpose of converting scientific discoveries into innovative, commercially viable products and processes;

To encourage the development of safe and environment-friendly technologies, products and processes, with due regard to economically sustainable use of natural and energy resources;

To foster convergent approaches on ethical questions related to the progress of scientific and technological knowledge;

To facilitate closer cooperation in the fields of science and technology with other partners and international organisations and to encourage co-funding schemes in order to formulate and implement regional research projects and to generate new synergies, in particular with the activities carried out under EU programmes and initiatives;

To consider the elaboration of legally binding documents, at bilateral and multilateral level, stipulating the procedures for the joint activities to be undertaken and the resources required to achieve specific agreed scientific and technological objectives;

and therefore,

Approve the *BSEC Action Plan on Cooperation in Science and Technology* as a means of achieving the goals set forth in this Declaration and as a practical expression of our renewed commitment to regional cooperation in the fields of science and technology;

Agree to convene a mid-term meeting of the Ministers responsible for Science and Technology of the BSEC Member States to review progress in the implementation of the approved Action Plan and to chart the way forward;

Welcome all other initiatives in the sphere of science, technology and innovation that are consistent with the broader BSEC cooperative agenda;

Express our gratitude to the Government of the Hellenic Republic for having taken the initiative for this Meeting and the Moldovan Chairmanship-in-Office, Ukraine as the Country Coordinator of the Working Group on Science and Technology, the BSEC PERMIS, the International Centre for Black Sea Studies and the European Commission for their contribution to the success of this Meeting.