



BS/CT/WG/R(98)1

**REPORT
OF THE MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP
ON COOPERATION IN TOURISM
Sofia, 23-24 July 1998**

1. The Meeting of the Working Group (WG) on Cooperation in Tourism was held in Sofia, Bulgaria on 23-24 July 1998.
2. The Meeting was chaired by Mrs. Mariana ASSENOVA, Deputy Minister of Trade and Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria.
3. The Meeting was attended by the following Participating States of the BSEC:
 - Republic of Albania
 - Republic of Armenia
 - Republic of Bulgaria
 - Georgia
 - Hellenic Republic
 - Republic of Moldova
 - Romania
 - Russian Federation
 - Republic of Turkey
 - Ukraine
4. The representatives of Egypt, Israel, Italy, Poland, Slovak Republic, BSEC Business Council and International Black Sea Club attended the Meeting as Observers.
5. The representatives of the World Tourism Organization (WTO), BSEC Coordination Center for the Exchange of Statistical Data and Economic Information, Universal Federation of Travel Agencies Associations (UFTAA) and Black Sea Tourism Organization (BSTC) attended the Meeting as Guests.

The list of participants is attached as Annex I.

6. Mrs. Mariana ASSENOVA, Deputy Minister of Trade and Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria and Mr. Peter SHACKLEFORD, WTO Regional Representative for Europe addressed the Meeting with the inaugural statements. The texts of the Statements are attached as Annex II.

7. The representatives of BSTC and UFTAA also addressed the Meeting.
8. The draft agenda of the Meeting was discussed and adopted with amendments. The agenda, as adopted, is attached as Annex III.
9. The discussions on the agenda items were held on the basis of the working papers prepared by the Ministry of Trade and Tourism of Bulgaria.
10. Parallel to the Meeting of the WG on Cooperation in Tourism a Meeting of the representatives of Travel Agency Associations or equivalent organizations and private sector involved in tourism business of the Black Sea region was also held.

JOINT INVESTMENT PROJECTS IN THE BSEC REGION

11. There was an exchange of views with regard to a series of concrete projects in the field of tourism infrastructure in the Participating States aimed at improving and developing the tourism facilities and services both for tourists of the Black Sea region and outside it.
12. The WG considered mechanisms of attracting investments in tourism industry, particularly the role of tourism investment fora held in various BSEC Participating States.
13. In this concern the participants welcomed the information by the Turkish Tourism Investors Association (TYD) regarding the Tourism Investment Exchange to be held in Istanbul, Turkey on 26-27 November 1998.
14. The delegations of Romania and Ukraine informed the participants on the International Travel Show to be held on 26-29 November 1998 and the International Tourist Fair in Kyiv scheduled for 14-16 October 1998 respectively. The delegation of Georgia informed of the Third Silk Road WTO Forum scheduled for 2-5 November 1998.
15. The WG drew the attention of the Participating States to the measures which have to be implemented in the countries for encouraging investments, as it was agreed at the BSEC Business Council Meeting held in November 1996 in Istanbul.

HARMONIZING THE TOURISM LEGISLATION

16. An exchange of views on the existing legislative frameworks of tourism activities took place. The WG reiterated the urgency of taking measures aimed at facilitating tourist movement within the Black Sea region. To that end the participants invited the Participating States to consider entering into bilateral or multilateral agreements and

arrangements facilitating travelling in the Black Sea region without prejudice to their international obligations.

17. In line with the decision of the first meeting of the WG the participants called upon the BSEC Coordination Center for the Exchange of Statistical Data and Economic Information to draw up a questionnaire in order to compile information on the legislative framework of the Participating States pertaining to the incentives for foreign investment in the field of tourism and to circulate it to the Participating States through the Permanent International Secretariat, to compile the answers and keep them at the disposal of the Participating States in an updated form.

18. It was agreed that at the next Meeting the Participating States would present the information on the normative acts in the field of tourism.

PERSONNEL QUALIFICATION TRAINING

19. The participants expressed their understanding of the necessity to develop training programs in various areas, such as: tourism education exchange program for the BSEC region aimed at training personnel for the tourism industry in the specialized schools; and on-the-job training provided by the advanced travel agencies.

20. The WG agreed on the expediency of the following measures:

- a) Organizing stagiers and seminars giving study grants for new occupations, such as family hotels and catering, occupations related to rural, agro and mountain tourism.
- b) Setting up study curricula for information about resources, tourist flows and possibilities for joint promotion by the BSEC countries.

21. Possible establishment of the tourism education joint projects fund was considered with regard to the implementation of these measures.

22. The WG, having considered further steps for developing training programs in the field of tourism for the BSEC Participating States, noted with appreciation the information of Greece regarding the continuation of the education seminars on tourism (tourism planning, hotel classification, etc. for senior staff of NTOs of the BSEC countries and on-the-job training in Greek hotels for students organized by the Greek school of Tourism Professions). The other development programs in the framework of bilateral cooperation and the expressed needs of the BSEC countries were also offered by Greece.

23. The WG noted with appreciation the Turkish proposal regarding the tourism training in the BSEC countries. In this context Turkey indicated its willingness to cooperate in developing training programs, organize courses concerning “training of trainers”, “on-the-job training”, “social skills seminars” and “language teaching

techniques courses". If the demand comes from the BSEC countries, Turkey is also ready to organize exchange programs for the students.

24. Welcoming the establishment with the assistance of PHARE of the Council for training in tourism located in Bulgaria, the WG called upon the EU to extend its activities for the BSEC region in a whole.

25. The WG referred to the possible assistance in training of specialized personnel from the Observer states which have rich traditions in the field of tourism.

CREATING A COMMON DATA BASE FOR THE BSEC MEMBER STATES

26. The participants expressed the view that setting up the data bank on tourism, containing relevant and periodically updated information on agreed basic indicators would form the basis for joint activities.

27. They took note with appreciation of the Questionnaire for creating a data bank on tourism issues in the BSEC Participating States prepared by the BSEC Coordination Center for the exchange of Statistical Data and Economic Information.

28. The participants agreed that the Participating States will send the filled in Questionnaire as well as their proposals on it to the BSEC Coordination Center where the necessary amendments will be made, in order to presented the Questionnaire in adopted form at the next Meeting of the WG.

DEVELOPING A MUTUAL MARKETING-PROMOTION STRATEGY FOR THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE BSEC REGION

29. The WG was in the opinion that creation of a joint tourism product of the Black Sea region is of crucial importance in developing a mutual marketing promotion strategy for the BSEC. It was stressed that the Black Sea region can offer joint tours, which appeal to special segments of tourism market expected to emerge in upcoming decades.

30. Joint product alternatives based on diverse potential of the BSEC region were identified, such as:

- a) Experience or Cultural tours , including multi-center city tours and Combined country tours;
- b) Special interest tours, including art and culture tours, fine arts festival tours, religious or faith tours and eco tours.

31. In this connection the WG welcomed the elaboration of the Black Sea Cruise and Fine Art Festival Tour by the BSTC Organization.

32. While considering the practical matters of elaboration of a comprehensive marketing strategy of the BSEC, the participants agreed:

a) to convene an ad hoc Group of Experts to that end composed of the representatives of the governmental authorities in charge of tourism of each BSEC Participating State, and of regional tourism professional organization of private sector (BSTC). They welcomed the offer of Bulgaria to assist in setting up of the said group;

b) to launch a campaign of promotion of the Black Sea region as the destination of 2000's. They expressed the view that complex of specific measures should be taken to this end, such as: working out of a common logo, issuing publicity prospects, films, CD, Internet WEB page, holding joint press-conferences, etc.

APPOINTMENT OF COUNTRY-COORDINATOR FOR THE WG ON COOPERATION IN TOURISM

33. The participants considered the proposal to appoint country-coordinator in the field of cooperation in tourism in line with the relevant provision of the Yalta Summit Declaration.

34. They were in the opinion that the appointment of country-coordinator could enhance and facilitate the joint work specifically on the development and implementation of BSEC projects and programs in the field of tourism.

35. The participants welcomed the willingness expressed by Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey to assume the role of country-coordinator. In order the final decision be taken they asked the above-mentioned countries to elaborate concrete Plan of Actions the coordinator would undertake, and send it to the PERMIS till 15 October 1998 for further distribution to all the Participating States.

36. The WG decided to consider certain functions and mandate of country-coordinator again at the next Meeting of the Working Group, taking into account the experience of the introduction of this institution.

DISCUSSION ON THE ROLE OF THE RECENTLY ESTABLISHED "BLACK SEA TOURISM COOPERATION ORGANIZATION" /BSTC/

37. The participants took note of the report by the Chairman of the parallel Meeting of the representatives of national Travel Agency Associations or equivalent organizations and private sector engaged in tourism of the BSEC Participating States.

38. They endorsed the setting up of the Black Sea Tourism Cooperation (BSTC) by the Travel Agency Associations Organization of six Participating States, namely Albania, Armenia, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and Turkey.

39. While appreciating the willingness of the BSTC to cooperate with the BSEC, the participants underlined that the involvement of the private sector in the BSEC activities in the field of tourism goes in line with the Yalta Summit Declaration in which the Heads of State or Government expressed their belief that the private sector should be the driving force for the consolidation of the BSEC process and consequently supported the involvement of the private sector in the development and implementation of concrete projects of interest to the Participating States.

40. In this respect, they called upon the national authorities of the Participating States in charge of tourism as well as the BSEC Business Council to render their assistance in the implementation of the programs and projects of mutual interest proposed by the BSTC.

41. The WG took note of the information of the Romanian Convention Bureau (RCB) regarding the establishment and development of a regional entity covering the Black Sea area. The Board of the RCB invited the responsible bodies of the BSEC Participating States to take part in the Meeting on 23-26 November 1998 in Bucharest coinciding with the Romanian International Travel Show.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

42. No issues were raised under this agenda item.

DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

43. The participants decided to invite the countries which may wish to host the next Meeting of the WG to notify the BSEC PERMIS accordingly.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING

44. The WG adopted the present Report for submission to the Twelfth MMFA.

EXPRESSION OF THANKS

45. The participants expressed their sincere thanks and gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria, and in particular to the Ministry of Trade and Tourism.

46. The WG expressed thanks to the Observers and guests of the Meeting for their participation and contribution.