

JOINT DECLARATION
OF THE MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF CULTURE AND TOURISM
OF THE MEMBER STATES OF THE ORGANIZATION
OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Sochi, the Russian Federation, 23 June 2016

We, the Ministers in charge of Culture and Tourism of the Member States of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC),

Recalling the Joint Declarations / Statements of the Ministers in charge of Culture and Tourism of the BSEC Member States adopted so far, and taking note of the activities of the BSEC Working Groups on Culture and on Cooperation in Tourism,

Guided by the “BSEC Economic Agenda: Towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership”, in particular by its Goal 8 “Development of Tourism and Protection of Cultural Heritage”, adopted in 2012,

Reaffirming the commitment of the Member States of the BSEC to strengthening their ties in the field of Culture and Tourism, as significant areas of cooperation among the BSEC Member States since the very inception of the BSEC,

Taking into consideration the Memorandum of Understanding concluded between the BSEC Organization and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO),

Convinced of the need to strengthen the role of the BSEC through making full use of its potential for dialogue, mutual understanding and cooperation, including in the fields of Culture and Tourism,

Confident that culture, cultural heritage, intercultural dialogue and creative industries are major assets for sustainable development in the creative economy, as well as for meeting the challenges faced by our societies in an ever changing world,

Have agreed to:

1. *Declare* our determination to work together in the framework of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization to strengthen and bolster cultural and tourism cooperation among the latter’s Member States, to encourage creativity and to stimulate innovation in these fields;

2. *Emphasize* the need to explore in a systematic way the potential of the region by developing joint innovative projects and organizing international cultural and tourism events in our countries that will pave the way for further cultural and tourism exchanges among them;
3. *Encourage* the implementation of Cultural tourism / Cultural routes projects in the Black Sea Region and, in this context, support the establishment of an institution called “the Cultural Port of the Black Sea”;
4. *Underline* the importance of following new trends in culture and tourism which pave new ways of cooperation, like the development of new Silk Road projects.

I. With respect to Culture:

1. *Focus* on the implementation of the following framework of action aimed at:
 - a) furthering the cooperation in the area of protection and promotion of cultural heritage, *inter alia*, by:
 - (i) supporting the establishment of an interdisciplinary network of scientists and experts, in order to promote research on the common cultural heritage of the Black Sea Region,
 - (ii) working towards the creation of a virtual library reflecting the cultural heritage and identity in the Black Sea Region,
 - (iii) promoting the restoration and other safeguarding projects of the architectural heritage on the territory of the BSEC Member States, and exchanging ideas about techniques concerning restoration of the monuments;
 - b) protecting the cultural heritage and combating illicit trafficking of cultural property belonging to the archaeological, historical, ethnographical legacy and the arts and concluding timely the relevant Memoranda of Understanding among the BSEC Member States;
 - c) building networks of cooperation and developing joint projects in the field of culture (literature, theatre, dance, music and visual arts);
 - d) promoting cultural and creative industries and enhancing the role that they play in the cooperation among the BSEC Member States in the field of the creative economy;
2. *Reiterate* our determination to continue promoting a model of cultural cooperation, based on:
 - a) respect for and promotion of the rich cultural heritage of our countries,
 - b) enhancement of intercultural dialogue as a means to increase mutual understanding and respect for each other,

c) identifying and maximizing the cultural potential and the available resources, including human capital, of the BSEC Member States,

d) addressing the challenge to link Culture and Economy and work with the stakeholders of the cultural and creative activities as well as with the private sector towards developing a sustainable economy of culture,

e) the improvement, through Culture, of the quality of life of the people in the region;

II. With respect to Tourism:

1. *Encourage* the National Authorities in charge of Tourism in the BSEC Member States to better coordinate their actions in order to contribute to the development of sustainable Tourism as one of the major vehicles for the socio-economic development and promote the BSEC region as one of the leading tourism destinations of the world, as well as an attractive region for investments in the tourism sector;

2. *Explore* the possibilities to promote visa and other travel facilitation, which would allow visitors from within and outside the BSEC region to move freely and efficiently towards and within the region;

3. *Undertake* joint efforts to improve connectivity in the Black Sea region, particularly in what concerns air, land, fluvial and maritime transport, with the aim of raising the awareness on the importance of a closer link between Tourism and relevant transport policies, as mentioned in the Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Transport (Sochi, 1 June 2016);

4. *Enhance* the regional dimension of the cooperation in the field of Tourism among the BSEC Member States, inter alia, by:

a) developing film-induced Tourism and gastronomic, wine and festival Tourism in a sustainable way, as high-value forms of Special Interest Tourism, along with other forms of niche Tourism, such as Agro-Tourism, rural and cultural Tourism, wellness and spa Tourism;

b) exploring the possibility of establishing a network among regional and national, public and private organizations, professional associations and educational institutions from BSEC Member States, which are involved in promoting gastronomic and wine Tourism in their respective regions/countries, in order to allow the exchange of know-how and best practices,

c) promoting transnational cooperation on joint projects on gastronomic and wine tour itineraries in the BSEC region, in order to strengthen the gastronomic identity and cooking culture of the region,

d) encouraging regional and local authorities as well as Destination Management Organizations to elaborate, when appropriate, film marketing action plans and gastronomy and wine marketing campaigns, in order to enhance the visibility of their destinations,

e) stimulating their national associations of travel and tourism agencies to encourage their members to create innovative, customized, thematic tourism products or packages addressed to special interest tourists from within and outside the BSEC region, who seek authentic, meaningful and personalized experiences;

f) developing and implementing joint projects in the field of maritime and fluvial cruise tourism in the Black Sea Region;

5. *Consider* ways of effective implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding between BSEC and UNWTO, signed in Athens on 23 October 2014, with a view to promoting the collaboration between the two Organizations;

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Instruct the BSEC Working Groups on Culture and on Cooperation in Tourism to follow up the progress and the effective implementation of the provisions of the present Joint Declaration and the relevant Goal of the BSEC Economic Agenda and to meet at joint meetings, whenever appropriate, for the consideration of joint projects;

Reaffirm our commitment to strengthen the cooperation and develop synergies with the BSEC Related Bodies, international and regional organizations and initiatives as well as with Non-Governmental organizations, as such partnerships and synergies offer additional value and strength to our Organization and increase the potential of the Black Sea region in the fields of Culture and Tourism;

We agree to meet, whenever appropriate, to follow up the decisions taken and to consider the matters related to cooperation in the fields of Culture and Tourism among the BSEC Member States;

We express our gratitude to the Government of the Russian Federation for the organization of the Conference and for the warm hospitality extended.