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**PRESS RELEASE ON THE WORKING VISIT OF THE BSEC PERMIS SECRETARY
GENERAL TO UKRAINE**

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General, Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES, paid a working visit to Ukraine on 13-16 April 2016.

In Kyiv, Secretary General Ambassador CHRISTIDES met with a number of Deputy Ministers and other high ranking representatives of the Ukrainian Government, despite the reshuffling of the latter that took place on the same days.

On 13 April, the Secretary General met with the Head of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hanna GOPKO, and Members of the Committee, with whom he had an exchange of views on the current situation in the wider Black Sea region and on ways and means to enhance the efficiency of both BSEC and PABSEC, for the benefit of the Member States' people. Secretary General CHRISTIDES underlined that, in today's overall difficult circumstances in the Black Sea region, BSEC constitutes a very valuable initial vehicle for dialogue and understanding, functioning as a confidence building mechanism among its Member States. He stated that a greater involvement of Parliamentarians in BSEC and PABSEC issues paves the way to a more efficient and effective cooperation among them.

Secretary General CHRISTIDES gave a briefing on BSEC issues at the "Ukrainian Media Crisis Centre", under the title "BSEC as a vehicle for promoting regional economic cooperation". He responded to questions addressed to him by journalists. The full video of the presentation can be accessed from YouTube: <https://youtu.be/j1xHbz2yOsw> .

Secretary General CHRISTIDES met with Deputy Minister for Infrastructure Mrs. Oksana REITER, who underlined the importance the Ukrainian Government attaches to a more productive activity of the BSEC Organization, especially in matters of infrastructure in the transports sector. Issues including trans-modal transports, the promotion of the modern Silk Road concept and the enhancement of new routes for the facilitation of trade in the wider Black Sea area, were among some of the items which the two sides discussed and exchanged views on.

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General also met with the Ukrainian Deputy Minister for Education, Mrs. Inna SOVSUN, and reviewed the work of the relevant BSEC Working

Group, underlining the importance of promoting more exchanges among the Member States in the educational field, i.e. among academics and students.

On 14 April, Secretary General CHRISTIDES delivered the opening statement on the occasion of the Workshop on "SMEs and Green Economy", which was held in Kyiv on 14-15 April 2016 and was co-organized by the BSEC PERMIS and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS).

He had a meeting with the Director General of the Department for International Trade and Economic Cooperation of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Mrs. Olena BALBENOVA, concerning trade facilitation.

At a working-luncheon with the Secretary General of the GUAM Organization Ambassador Mr. Altai EFENDIEV, the possibility of establishing cooperation between the two Organizations was discussed.

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General also had a meeting with the Head of the Directorate General for Foreign Policy and European Integration of the Administration of the President of Ukraine, Dr. Igor ZHOVKVA, on the latest developments concerning the BSEC family of institutions.

On 15 April, Secretary General CHRISTIDES met with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Vadym PRYSTAIKO, covering issues concerning BSEC and the active participation of Ukraine, as a Founding Member, to the activities of the Organization. Secretary General CHRISTIDES briefed the Deputy Minister on the latest developments and on the initiative undertaken by the PERMIS to promote a more streamlined and effective functioning of BSEC. Deputy Minister PRYSTAIKO underlined the importance his Government attaches to the enhancement of the efficiency of the Organization and encouraged the Secretary General to pursue new ways to render BSEC more project-oriented and productive.

During his meeting with the Deputy Minister of Culture, Mr. Andrii VITRENKO, the performance of the BSEC Working Group on Culture was reviewed, focusing mainly on cultural heritage issues and the plans to establish the "Cultural Port of the Black Sea" institution, together with the European Centre for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments in Thessaloniki.

The meeting of the Secretary General with the members of the Advisory Council of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee included a presentation by the Secretary General on the latest developments concerning the BSEC family of institutions and a Q&A session, during which he responded to numerous questions from his interlocutors, mostly retired diplomats of the Ukrainian Foreign Service.

During his stay, Secretary General CHRISTIDES was also interviewed by the Chief Editor of the Black Sea News Agency, Mr. Andrei KLIMENKO. The full text of the interview can be accessed from <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/115097> .

The program of meetings of the Secretary General contributed to a more comprehensive and up-to-date exchange of information on BSEC issues between the high-ranking officials of the Ukrainian Government and the PERMIS Secretary General.