



ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

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PRESS-RELEASE

ON THE CONFERENCE OF THE MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF CULTURE AND TOURISM OF THE BSEC MEMBER STATES

(Sochi, Russian Federation, 23 June 2016)

A Conference of the Ministers in charge of Culture and Tourism of the BSEC Member States was held in Sochi (Krasnaya Polyana), Russian Federation, on 23 June 2016, within the framework of the Russian Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC. The Conference, organized as a high level event, with the participation of the Ministers, Deputy Ministers in charge of Culture and Tourism and Heads of the National Administrations for Tourism of the BSEC Member States, was chaired by Mr. Sergey KORNEEV, Deputy Head of the Federal Agency for Tourism of the Russian Federation.

Welcome addresses were delivered by Mr. Sergey KORNEEV, Mr. Sergey USENKO, Deputy Governor of Krasnodar Krai, H.E. Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES, Secretary General of the Permanent International Secretariat of BSEC and Mr. Zoltan SOMOGYI, Executive Director of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

The Heads of Delegations in their statements raised a number of important proposals on how to further enhance the cooperation among the BSEC Member States in the fields of Culture and Tourism and adopted "*The Joint Declaration of the Conference of the Ministers in charge of Culture and Tourism of the Member States of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.*"

The Joint Declaration expresses the determination of the Member States to work together in the framework of the BSEC to strengthen and bolster cultural and tourism cooperation among them, to encourage creativity and to stimulate innovation in these fields. 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 BSEC countries that will pave the way for further cultural and tourism exchanges among them was also emphasized.

The participants agreed with the proposal of the BSEC PERMIS to initiate the collection of statistical data concerning the intra-BSEC touristic flows, as well as data referring to the BSEC Member States' incoming and outgoing touristic flows from and to non-BSEC countries, as it will help underline the importance of intra-BSEC Tourism and help Member States in their efforts to further enhance their cooperation in the fields of Tourism and Culture. They also welcomed the intention expressed by the Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria to consider assuming the function of the Country-Coordinator of the BSEC Working Group on Cooperation in Tourism.

The participants expressed their gratitude to the Government of the Russian Federation for the organization of the Conference and for the warm hospitality extended.

The Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS met on the sidelines of the Conference with a number of Ministers and Heads of Delegations. He also held comprehensive consultations with the Executive Director of the UNWTO on the issues of shared interest between the two organizations, especially in what concerns the adoption of practical measures for the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding, signed by BSEC and UNWTO in 2014.

The Conference of the Ministers was preceded by two preparatory expert meetings, namely, the Joint Meeting of the BSEC Working Groups on Culture and on Cooperation in Tourism, as well as a separate meeting of the Working Group on Cooperation in Tourism, both held in Sochi, on 22 June 2016.