



ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION  
**Permanent International Secretariat**

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**PRESS RELEASE ON  
THE 35<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE BSEC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
(Belgrade, 13 December 2016)**

The 35<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) was held on 13 December 2016, in Belgrade, the Republic of Serbia.

The President of the Republic of Serbia H.E. Mr. Tomislav NIKOLIC addressed the Council at the opening of the meeting. The meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Ivica DACIC, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia and the BSEC Chairman-in-Office.

In addition to Ministers and Heads of Delegations of the BSEC Member States, the representatives of the BSEC Related Bodies, Observers and Sectoral Dialogue Partners also participated in the Council meeting.

The Ministers and Heads of Delegations made statements on issues regarding the latest developments in the region and the activities of their countries' within the Organization, as well as regarding proposals for enhancing its efficiency.

The Heads of Delegations agreed on their common resolve to further strengthen the Organization as it gears up to celebrate its 25th Anniversary, in 2017, underlining its important role in fostering regional economic cooperation and promoting the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

In his statement, the Secretary General of the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat H.E. Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES presented information regarding the operations and activities of the Secretariat during the second semester of 2016, as well as some of the challenges facing the Organization and the significance of the reform process to address them.

At the closing session, the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs adopted Resolutions, Decisions and Recommendations on various issues, including the granting of Observer status to the French Republic; the renewal of the Observer status of the Republic of Poland and the Sectoral Dialogue Partnership status of the Republic of Korea, Montenegro and the Black Sea Region Association of Shipbuilders and Shiprepairers (BRASS); the activities of BSEC Related Bodies; the appointment of Country-Coordinators to some of the BSEC Working Groups; as well as the approval of the 2017 BSEC Budget and the appointments to several positions at the Permanent International Secretariat of the Organization.

The Council also took note of the initiative of the Russian Federation to establish, within the BSEC PERMIS, a project promotion facility with a voluntary contribution of one million US dollars to support concrete regional projects. The Facility will be jointly utilized by the BSEC PERMIS and the BSTDB.

The Council also approved the Memorandum of Understanding between the Permanent International Secretariat of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Secretariat of the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions of Europe and authorized the Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS to sign the said Memorandum on behalf of BSEC. This document will be signed in the near future.

During the final session, a signing ceremony took place whereby the *Agreement among the Governments of the Participating States of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation on Collaboration in Emergency Assistance and Emergency Response to Natural and Man-Made Disasters and its Additional Protocol* were signed by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of the Republic of Serbia, H.E. Mr. Nebojsa STEFANOVIC, on behalf of Serbia.

The Council expressed its appreciation to the Serbian BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office for its effective work in promoting BSEC goals and objectives during the current semester and for the excellent organization of the 35<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

At the conclusion of the meeting, a ceremony took place whereby the Republic of Serbia handed over the Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC to the Republic of Turkey. Turkey will officially assume the Chairmanship on 1 January 2017, for a period of six months.

Ministers and Heads of Delegations congratulated Turkey upon the assumption of its duties and wished it every success in the implementation of its priorities and in the preparation of the milestone BSEC 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Summit in June 2017, to be hosted in Istanbul.

### **Background Information:**

BSEC was launched as a regionally owned initiative, with Turkey's lead, on 25 June 1992 at the Istanbul Summit, at a time when regional cooperation was most needed in the transformation process that the countries of the region were undergoing. The idea that stronger economic cooperation among the Black Sea countries would enhance peace, stability and prosperity in the region was the underlying philosophy behind BSEC. With the entry into force of its Charter in 1999, BSEC was officially transformed from an initiative into a regional cooperation organization.

Today, after 24 years of its launching, BSEC serves as a forum for cooperation in a wide range of areas and a platform for dialogue for its 12 Member States.<sup>1</sup> The BSEC countries encompass an area of approximately 20 million square kilometers, with a market of 337 million people. The annual intra-BSEC trade volume stands at 264 billion USD. Agriculture and agro-industry, banking and finance, combating organized crime, culture, customs matters, education, emergency assistance, energy, environmental protection, exchange of statistical data and information, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, information and communication technologies, institutional renewal and good governance, science and technology, SMEs, tourism, trade and economic development and transport are among the fields of cooperation within the framework of the Organization.

BSEC has four Related Bodies<sup>2</sup>, 16 Observers<sup>3</sup> and 16 Sectoral Dialogue Partners.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The 12 BSEC Member States are Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine.

<sup>2</sup> The Parliamentary Assembly of the BSEC (PABSEC), the BSEC Business Council (BSEC BC), the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB) and the International Center for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) are the four Related Bodies of BSEC.

<sup>3</sup> Austria, Belarus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Egypt, Germany, Israel, Italy, Poland, Slovak Republic, Tunisia, USA, the European Commission, Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution, Energy Charter Secretariat and International Black Sea Club have Observer status in BSEC.

<sup>4</sup> Hungary, Japan, Republic of Korea, Montenegro, Slovenia, Iran, Black Sea International Shipowners Association (BINSAs), Black and Azov Seas Ports Association (BASPA), Union of Road Transport Association in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Region (BSEC-URTA), Black Sea Region Association of Shipbuilders and Shiprepairers (BRASS), Black Sea University Network (BSUN), Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR), Danube Commission, International Network for SMEs (INSME), World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the Black Sea Broadcasting Regulatory Authorities Forum (BRAFA) have Sectoral Dialogue Partnership status in BSEC.