

**ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION**  
**Permanent International Secretariat**  
*Istanbul / Turkey*

Fax: (+90212) 2296336 E-mail: [info@bsec-organization.org](mailto:info@bsec-organization.org) [www.bsec-organization.org](http://www.bsec-organization.org)

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**PRESS RELEASE**  
**ON**  
**THE PARTICIPATION OF THE BSEC PERMIS SECRETARY GENERAL TO**  
**THE "WESTERN PLATFORM" CONFERENCE**  
**hosted by the "Istanbul Aydin University"**  
**(Istanbul, 5 January 2017)**

The Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS, Ambassador Michael B. Christides, participated as keynote speaker at "*The Western Platform*", a conference organized by the "*Istanbul Aydin University*", on the 5th of January 2017 on its campus.

Addressing a distinguished audience (among whom Dr. Mustafa Aydin, Head of Delegation of the Istanbul Aydin University, H.E. Mr. Bülent Akarcali, Former Minister of Tourism, H.E. Mr. Egemen Bagis, Former Minister in Charge of EU Affairs, H.E. Ambassador Mr. Ünal Çeviköz, professors, academics and journalists) and under the title "*Can the Black Sea be a Constructive Factor in Uniting the East with the West?*" Ambassador Christides described the various factors influencing the developments in the crucial region of the wider Black Sea area.

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General promoted the idea that this area can evolve into a positive factor for bridging the gap between East and West. He underlined that together with other regional organizations and entities, the *Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation* already plays a significant role towards this direction, having established not only a dense network of cooperation among its Member States, but also by introducing a general culture for dialogue and understanding in the region.

According to Ambassador Christides, the one great obstacle for the final success of similar efforts are the bilateral conflicts and tensions, which are still burdening stability and security in the area.

He expressed the hope that Turkey, being the country where the idea of establishing the BSEC Organization was initially conceived, can further enhance the positive contribution of the latter during the Turkish Chairmanship-in-Office (1 January - 30 June 2017), which will culminate with the Ninth Summit Meeting of the Organization, to be hosted later this year in Turkey.

The address by the PERMIS Secretary General inspired for a lively and interesting discussion, as well as a question & answer session with the active participation of many members of the distinguished audience.

