



ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Permanent International Secretariat

PRESS RELEASE ON THE HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON BLACK SEA FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE (Sofia, 6-7 June 2018)

Upon the invitation from the *General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean* (GFCM) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry of Bulgaria, the Secretary General of BSEC PERMIS Ambassador Michael B. Christides participated in the High-Level Conference on Black Sea Fisheries and Aquaculture held in Sofia on 6-7 June 2018.

The Conference was organized by GFCM and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry of Bulgaria with the financial support of the European Union. Aimed at discussing the main issues affecting the fisheries management and the perspectives for the responsible development of aquaculture in the Black Sea, the Conference was attended by the representatives of nine BSEC Member States, the European Commission, the Commission on the Protection of Black Sea against Pollution, FAO, GFCM and BSEC.

In his statement the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General highlighted the special importance the BSEC Organization attaches to the promotion of joint activities in the field of fisheries and aquaculture in the Black Sea region. The Secretary General made a reference to the activities of BSEC, specifically mentioning the *International Conference on Fisheries and Blue Growth*, which was held in Istanbul in early November 2017, organized by BSEC and the Sariyer municipality, which considered the main issues affecting fisheries management, the environmental and socio-economic impact on fisheries and aquaculture and the perspectives of development of these sectors in the Black Sea area. Ambassador Christides expressed the hope that some of the important conclusions of BSEC Conference can be taken into account as a contribution to the efforts of so many stakeholders in order to reverse the declining trend of fish stocks in the Black Sea.

On a more practical level, the Secretary General proposed to the GFCM and to the European Commission to convene next year, a joint BSEC-EC-GFCM scientific workshop/seminar on environmental issues and their socio-economic impact on living marine resources and ecosystems in the Black Sea to be organized back-to-back to the “2nd International Conference on Fisheries and Blue Growth” in Istanbul in 2019.

Ambassador Christides also suggested that the very sober and informative film produced by the GFCM and shown during the high-level meeting, could be transmitted by the national TV Channels of all BSEC Member States, in order to sensitize and inform their respective public on the serious issues that need to be urgently addressed.

On the margins of the Conference Ambassador Christides had interesting discussions with the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Forestry of Bulgaria, the European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and with the Executive Secretary of GFCM.