

Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation: 19th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)

Thursday 9 October 2008, by [Emanuele G.](#)

The 19th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) will be held in Tirana on 23 October 2008. The meeting will be hosted by the Republic of Albania. H.E. Mr. Lulzim BASHA, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, will chair the meeting in his capacity as the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization.

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States (1) , as well as the representatives of BSEC Observers (2), Related Bodies (3), Sectoral Dialogue Partners (4) and special guests are expected to participate in and deliver statements at the meeting.

An important item on the agenda of the meeting will be the adoption of the “Guidelines on Improvement of the BSEC Efficiency.” As it will be recalled, the draft Guidelines were discussed last month at the informal meeting of the BSEC Ministers of Foreign Affairs in New York, on the sidelines of the 63rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, on 25 September 2008. It was with the initiative of H.E. Mr. Ali BABACAN, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, that this issue was proposed in May 2008 to be addressed by the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs. It is anticipated that the Guidelines, some of which are already under implementation, will produce positive results in further increasing the efficiency of BSEC.

During the Tirana meeting, the Agreements on Simplification of Visa Procedures for the Businesspeople and for the Professional Lorry Drivers Nationals of the BSEC Member States will be opened for signature. These two legal documents are expected to make valuable contributions to the trade cooperation and investments among the BSEC Member States, as they will facilitate the movement of businesspeople, professional lorry drivers and goods in the region.

Some of the other items on the meeting’s agenda are BSEC-EU interaction, amendments to the financial regulations and procedures of BSEC, appointment of Country-Coordinators for various BSEC Working Groups, review of the state of cooperation among the Member States and the status of implementation of BSEC Council Resolutions, Decisions and Recommendations and assessment of the activities of the Permanent International Secretariat of BSEC as well as BSEC Related Bodies. Applications for granting or renewal of Observer status and Sectoral Dialogue

Partnership status to various countries and organizations will also be considered at the Tirana meeting.

One of the main documents which will come out of the meeting will be the “Tirana Declaration of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.” This Declaration will be a reflection of the joint disposition of the Member States on BSEC cooperation and activities, as well as their common interests, priorities and vision on the role of the Organization.

At the conclusion of the meeting, there will be a ceremony where Albania will hand over the Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC to Armenia. The Republic of Armenia will officially assume the Chairmanship as of 1 November 2008, for a period of six months until 30 April 2009.

As is known, BSEC was launched as a regionally owned initiative, with Turkey’s lead, back in 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 and stability in the region was the underlying philosophy behind BSEC. In 1998, BSEC was officially transformed from an initiative into a regional cooperation organization with the adoption of the BSEC Charter in Yalta.

Today, BSEC has become a project-oriented organization which serves as a forum for cooperation in a wide range of areas that include transport, energy, trade, economic development, communications, education, culture, tourism, science, technology, healthcare, good governance, customs services, exploration and extraction of hydrocarbon resources and fight against organized crime.

(1) The 12 BSEC Member States are comprised of Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine which are littorals of the Black Sea, as well as Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Greece, Moldova and Serbia.

(2) Austria, Belarus, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Tunisia, the United States of America, the International Black Sea Club, the Energy Charter Secretariat, the Black Sea Commission and the Commission of the European Communities have Observer status in BSEC.

(3) 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.

(4) Hungary, the UK, 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), Regional Commonwealth in the Field of Communications (RCC) and International Network for SMEs (INSME) have Sectoral Dialogue Partnership status in BSEC.