

BSEC ministers adopt new guidelines in principle

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Turkish Foreign Affairs Minister Ali Babacan says as the guidelines for improving the BSEC's efficiency are the result of the meticulous work on the part of that organization's officials, they will certainly help to improve the efficiency and effectiveness as well as the visibility of the organization BSEC Secretary General Ambassador Leonidas Chrysanthopoulos emphasized that if BSEC is to continue progressing, it is indispensable that bilateral tensions or crises of the region be kept outside of BSEC

GÜL DEMİR

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Economic cooperation is the cornerstone of regional stability, which is why Turkey places the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, or BSEC, high among its foreign policy priorities, the foreign affairs minister said Thursday. Ali Babacan was speaking at a working lunch hosted by Albanian Foreign Minister Lulzim Basha, chairman of the Office of the BSEC. Foreign ministers for Turkey, Romania, Georgia and Azerbaijan attended the lunch, while the rest of the 12 BSEC member countries were represented by deputy foreign ministers.

The result of the meeting was that the guidelines for improving the BSEC's efficiency -- the original initiative for which had come from Babacan -- were agreed upon in principle by all member countries. Babacan expressed his conviction that as the guidelines were the result of meticulous work on the part of that organization's officials, they would certainly help to improve the efficiency and effectiveness as well as the visibility of the BSEC. There were, however, observations made by Georgian Foreign Minister Eka Tkeshelasvili that will have to be examined by the Committee of Senior Officials, which will meet in Tirana on Oct. 20, just before the formal meeting of the BSEC ministers of foreign affairs, which will be convened Oct. 23.

The Caucasus situation

On the situation in the Caucasus, Babacan said the recent conflict in Georgia had once again revealed the need to focus more intensely on confidence building among the countries of the Black Sea region. He spoke about the new initiative that Turkey has launched called the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform to bring a new sense of momentum to the region.

This initiative, he explained, was not intended to constitute an alternative to the present mechanisms for conflict resolution but was an additional platform to facilitate communication between the countries of the region, provide a comprehensive framework to develop stability, confidence and cooperation, and a forum for dialogue. He also mentioned that negotiations to take the initiative forward with other participants are ongoing. The participants are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Russia.

He finally underlined that in the future the CSCP would establish synergies with other relevant organizations operating in the region – such as the BSEC – in order to complement their work toward achieving establishing peace and stability in the region.

The BSEC secretary general, Ambassador Leonidas Chrysanthopoulos, emphasized that if the BSEC was to continue progressing, it was vital that bilateral tensions or crises of the region be kept outside of the organization, which he emphasized was an economic organization. He also mentioned that the economic infrastructure projects must not be negatively affected by such crises.

“This ministerial meeting, the first after the August crisis, demonstrated that the political will of the ministers to continue advancing the BSEC is there stronger than ever and the meeting could be seen as a preparatory one to the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs that will convene in Tirana on Oct. 23. I do not think that the August crisis will affect the work of the BSEC.”