

Black Sea NEWS

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BSEC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS MEETS IN YEREVAN

The 20th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation was held in Yerevan on 16 April 2009. The meeting was hosted by the Republic of Armenia. H.E. Mr. Edward NALBANDIAN, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, chaired the meeting in his capacity as the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization.

The Ministers/Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States, as well as the representatives of Related Bodies, BSEC Observers, Sectoral Dialogue Partners and special guests participated and delivered statements at the meeting.

In the working session of the meeting, the Ministers examined the effects of the global financial crisis and the possible ways to reduce its negative consequences in the BSEC Region. The Ministers also focused on measures to further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of BSEC. This was done in support of the "Guidelines on Improvement of the BSEC Efficiency" which were adopted in the previous Meeting of the Council in Tirana on 23 October 2008.

The Council, at its meeting in Yerevan, made appointments to positions at the Secretariat of the Organization. Within this framework, Ambassador Leonidas CHRYSANTHOPOULOS was reappointed as Secretary General, while Ambassador Sumru NOYAN was appointed as the First Deputy Secretary General, becoming the first female to take over a directorial post at the Secretariat,

thus also contributing to the gender balance in the Secretariat. Appointments to other positions were also made.

The Ministers adopted a decision on possible means of strengthening the cooperation of BSEC with international organizations dealing with issues of the protection and rehabilitation of the Black Sea marine environment. The use of BSEC funds - namely, the Project Development Fund and the Hellenic Development Fund - for projects of regional impact, was also on the agenda of the meeting. The Council also adopted Resolutions, Decisions and Recommendations on topics such as BSEC-EU interaction, appointment of Country-Coordination for various BSEC Working Groups, and the state of cooperation among the Member States.

In Yerevan, the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs renewed the Observer status of the Republic of Tunisia and the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution. The Council also granted Sectoral Dialogue Partnership status to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Danube Commission.

At the conclusion of the meeting, a ceremony took place whereby Armenia handed over the Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC to Azerbaijan. The Republic of Azerbaijan officially assumed the Chairmanship as of 1 May 2009, for a six month period that ends 31 October 2009.



Family photo at the 20th Meeting of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Yerevan.



20th Meeting of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.



Joint press conference following the 20th Meeting of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.



Interview with H.E. Mr. Elmar MAMMADYAROV, Chairman-in-Office of BSEC, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

BS NEWS: Could you briefly tell us about Azerbaijan's Chairmanship-in-Office in BSEC? What are the priorities of the Azerbaijani Chairmanship?

E.MAMMADYAROV: Our Chairmanship coincides with an important jubilee - the 10th Anniversary of the transformation of BSEC into a regional organization. Since 1 May 1999, when the BSEC Charter entered into force, our organization has evolved into a full-fledged organization covering all dimensions and numerous areas of cooperation. Therefore, using this opportunity, first and foremost, I would like to congratulate all BSEC Member States, all those who contributed to and were involved in the development of BSEC as our collective endeavor to bring peace, stability and development to our peoples and countries with this remarkable occasion.

On the one hand, this jubilee is a good reason to celebrate, on the other - I believe, we should use this opportunity to critically assess our past 10 years in order to make our cooperation more fruitful, efficient and for the organization to play a more important role in regional affairs.

It is widely acknowledged that our region with ever growing geostrategic importance and significance is one of the most dynamic developing areas in the world economy, possessing greater potential and strong comparative advantages for regional cooperation and growth. At the same time regional cooperation is a hostage to numerous conflicts and political tensions spread across this vast area. These are the challenges that we all face and they have to be adequately addressed.

In this context we consider that BSEC, as a multilateral inter-governmental organization, should not only serve as a useful framework for dialogue, but should also play the role of an important regional instrument for shaping a common and shared vision and be able and capable for developing a conducive political environment for the implementation of regional projects to the benefit of all Member States.

Therefore, we believe that the organizational setup and modus operandi of BSEC should be appropriately amended in order to meet these challenges. As recent experience shows, the Organization cannot operate efficiently and effectively based on the rules and procedures designed in the 1990s when the context and environment were different. Therefore, we, as the Chairmanship-in-Office, see the need for change in BSEC and make this as our first priority.

In its last consecutive Chairmanships from May 2003 until May 2004, Azerbaijan initiated the process of reforms in BSEC and has ardently been following that guideline. This Chairmanship, we would consider as yet another attempt to provide the necessary impetus to the process of reforms with the aim to make BSEC more relevant and adequate to the development challenges that our region faces. For that purpose, we will attempt to mobilize the political will of the Member States to proceed with bold and radical steps in that direction.

We understand the challenge and, therefore, we consider the engagement of the international community, in particular international stakeholders with strategic interests in the development of the region as a secure, stable and prosperous area, as another important task. In this regard, the development of close ties between BSEC and the European Union, as well as other Observers, we view as our priority as well. In view of the above-mentioned, we reckon that the use of the EU expertise, experience and resources in the promotion and development of regional cooperation could be mutually beneficial and bring greater results. Therefore, BSEC-EU relations will remain in the focus of our attention.

While supporting the ongoing activities in such important areas of cooperation as energy, transport, trade and economic development and other priority areas also in BSEC-EU interaction, during its Chairmanship Azerbaijan will also pay particular attention to the further promotion of cooperation in such field as information and communication technologies (ICT). As the Country-Coordinator of the Working Group (WG) on ICT for the next two years, we consider the promotion of yet another trans-regional project - "Transnational-Eurasian Information Super Highway" as the core for the activities in the field.

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As I mentioned, conflicts remain as major impediments to comprehensive regional cooperation in this important area. Azerbaijan, as one of the BSEC countries who suffers from aggressive separatism and consequences of occupation of our territories, considers the resolution of these conflicts as the most important issue for the promotion of comprehensive regional cooperation and utilizing the potential of BSEC. The BSEC philosophy based on the premise that economic cooperation without the resolution of conflicts could contribute to confidence-building among the Member States and consequently bring stability and security to this region, proved to be mistaken. For 17 years now, BSEC was unable to contribute to the improvement of the political environment. As a result, we cannot talk of any significant progress or achievement in developing regional cooperation in the framework of BSEC. In fact, we witness that BSEC, due to the above-mentioned reason, being incapable to develop, participate or contribute to the ongoing important developments in the region, is slipping further into irrelevance. We all have to reverse this process.

Therefore, we believe that overlooking this situation does not serve the interests of our Organization and we have to find an appropriate format to address this issue.

Throughout our Chairmanship, we will try to substitute activities with concrete and result-oriented actions. However, the results of our efforts will depend on the collective will and commitments of all Member States.

BS NEWS: Are you planning to hold any highlight events during your Chairmanship?

E.MAMMADYAROV: Given our priorities described above, we intend to initiate a high-level political dialogue on the future of the wider Black Sea region and the role of BSEC in its development. For that purpose, we will host in Baku the High-Level Conference on the Future of BSEC back to back with the Informal Meeting of Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs in charge of BSEC. We hope that open and frank dialogue and deliberations will create a ground for practical steps in the process of reforms and reorganization.

We are also planning to host two sectoral ministerial meetings - the Meeting of BSEC Ministers on Information and Communication Technologies and the Meeting of Ministers of Emergencies. Other initiatives are also under consideration in the BSEC-EU domain, small and medium enterprise development, energy and other areas of cooperation.

As per the practice, at the end of our Chairmanship, we are going to organize the Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of BSEC Member States in Baku.

BS NEWS: How does Azerbaijan view BSEC and its future?

E.MAMMADYAROV: Azerbaijan, as one of the most dynamic emerging economies in this region, has strong potential to further contribute to the development of regional cooperation and prosperity of countries of the region as a whole. Azerbaijan has pioneered and is among major contributors to the development and implementation of large regional infrastructure projects in energy and transport that changed the geo-economic landscape of the region. Since our last Chairmanships in 2003-2004, major regional infrastructure projects (in energy and transport, such as BTC, BTE, in the framework of the TRACECA programme) have been realized and put in operation. Another important infrastructure project - the Kars-Tbilisi-Baku railway is under implementation. My country has turned into a net investor in regional economies, contributing to the development and prosperity of the countries of the region.

We consider the wider Black Sea region as an area of vital interests for our economic, social and political development. Therefore, we are willing to contribute to the development of the region as a stable, secure and prosperous area. We would like to see the role of BSEC - the most advanced, comprehensive and inclusive structure in this region - to be a more capable and pro-active regional organization.

Consequently, we are confident that, while setting its reformation guidelines, our Organization should not overlook the existing and potential threats caused by such evils as armed conflicts, organized crime, drug-trafficking, aggressive separatism and terrorism in all their forms and manifestations and be able to timely identify and adequately respond to such cases. This ability will define its robustness and resilience, as well as the success of our cooperation. We hope that the second decennial of the Organization will be marked with more tangible results on the ground and BSEC will play a more visible and important role in shaping and developing the region. Azerbaijan will do its utmost to contribute to that end.

BSEC PERMANENT INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT MARKING ITS 15th ANNIVERSARY

On 10 March, BSEC commemorated the 15th anniversary of the establishment of its Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS).

On 10 March 1994, the BSEC PERMIS was established in Istanbul to provide secretarial services and support to the BSEC. Today, as one of the principle organs of the Organization of BSEC, the Secretariat functions with 23 international staff members.

Throughout the 15 years since its establishment, the PERMIS has evolved from being an organ that carries out the basic secretarial services of the Organization into being the primary engine for the coordination of the activities of the BSEC Working Groups, the BSEC Committee of Senior Officials and the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States, in close cooperation with the BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office. Its international contacts and its active participation in meetings held within the framework of regional and international fora serve to promote the BSEC and its main principles, objectives, activities and projects.

editorial

Dear Readers,

The global financial crisis is on the top of the international agenda. It is an urgent issue of common concern for the entire international community. We, in BSEC, are also trying to address the crisis and to reduce its effects in the region. The 20th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (CMFA) of the BSEC Member States was held in Yerevan on 16 April. For the first time, the CMFA had a theme for its general debate. The theme was the global financial crisis and its implications in the region. At the end of its meeting, the Council adopted a decision on this issue.



Before the CMFA Meeting, the BSEC Working Group on Banking and Finance met on 9-10 April in Yerevan, with the participation of the IMF and of the World Bank. The Working Group dealt with the financial crisis and its management comprehensively, making an in depth assessment of the situation within the BSEC Member States.

BSEC's activities during the period of November 2008 to April 2009 were guided by the Republic of Armenia, holding the BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office. The Armenian Chairmanship implemented a comprehensive calendar of events which covered the most important areas of cooperation of our Organization. During the Armenian Chairmanship, progress was achieved in further developing cooperation in the areas of transport and energy, with BSEC Ministerial Meetings held in these two spheres.

Another development has been the granting of Sectoral Dialogue Partnership status to the Islamic Republic of Iran, which has been absent from our region, will soon start joining our activities in the areas of trade, banking and finance, energy, transport, agriculture, healthcare, environmental protection and tourism, along with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan which was also granted Sectoral Dialogue Partnership status within BSEC.

The BSEC Steering Committee on Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods, at its meeting on 11 February, elaborated several options on the progressive liberalization of the road transport of goods, which also include the establishment of a BSEC transit permit system. This new system will allow a truck leaving one BSEC Member State to go to another one with only one document that will be issued by the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat, in cooperation with the IRU and BSEC-URTA. It will facilitate the work of the road transporters and simplify border crossing procedures. It will also generate funds for the budget of our Organization. We hope to start implementing this system by the beginning of next year on an experimental basis, thus becoming the only regional organization to issue such transit documents.

The period of the Armenian Chairmanship-in-Office has witnessed an increase in the cooperation of BSEC with other international and regional organizations, including the UN and the Central European Initiative. BSEC's cooperation with the UNDP, UNECE, UNICEF, UNODC, UNEP and FAO was discussed during a meeting with the UN Secretary General BAN Ki-moon in Istanbul in April. Following the consultations with Central European Initiative (CEI) Secretary General Ambassador Ercole AGO in Trieste in December 2008, CEI has started to participate in and contribute to the meetings of some of the BSEC bodies.

Progress has also been achieved in BSEC's cooperation with its Observers, particularly Austria, Germany, France and the USA. The initiative of the Austrian Foreign Minister Michael SPINDELEGGER to convene a meeting with the Ambassadors of the BSEC Member States in Vienna in February was the first meeting of its kind organized by an Observer. Such meetings can contribute to exploring areas where meaningful cooperation can be developed.

Recently, we celebrated some important dates in the history of our Organization. On 10 March, BSEC marked the 15th anniversary of the establishment of its Permanent International Secretariat. And 1 May was the 10th anniversary of the entering into force of the BSEC Charter, with which BSEC acquired an international legal identity, transforming from an initiative into a regional cooperation organization.

And now, we are approaching another important milestone; on 14 June, we will celebrate the 10th anniversary of the founding of the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank. The establishment of the BSTDB in 1999 has undoubtedly been one of the most successful projects of BSEC. Not many examples exist worldwide of such a major achievement in regional collaboration between neighboring countries as our own. The BSTDB has contributed significantly to the acceleration of development and the promotion of regional trade, finance and projects. As a multilateral international financial institution that conducts its operations in a competitive environment, we are proud to note that the BSTDB has followed prudent banking principles, ensuring the viability of all its financial activities. BSEC will continue to be committed to further strengthening its cooperation and coordination with the BSTDB in order to enhance, by joint efforts, its contributions to the economic development of our region.

With the Republic of Azerbaijan taking over the BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office, in our next issue, I look forward to sharing with you new developments and projects to the benefit of our region.

Ambassador Leonidas CHRYSANTHOPOULOS
Secretary General of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS)



BLACK SEA TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BANK (BSTDB)

BSTDB ESTABLISHES A TECHNICAL COOPERATION SPECIAL FUND WITH THE DEVELOPMENT BANK OF AUSTRIA

In the framework of the Observer Status recently granted by BSTDB to the Development Bank of Austria (OeEB), the two institutions established a Technical Cooperation Special Fund (the Fund) aimed at facilitating technical cooperation activities in the BSTDB member countries.

The OeEB will contribute to the Fund an initial amount of EUR 500,000 provided by the Government of Austria as Official Development Assistance (ODA). BSTDB will administer the Fund according to its relevant policies and the signed Contribution Agreement and Rules and Regulations of the Fund.

BSTDB will utilize the Fund to finance consultancy services provided to private sector entities for the preparation of feasibility studies, business plans, financial analysis and accounts, training for partner financial institutions, financing of business studies and other relevant activities.

The Fund will be used in the BSTDB member countries eligible for Official Development Assistance (ODA), which currently include Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Turkey and Ukraine. The Fund represents the first facility of this kind provided to BSTDB by a non-regional institution.



Members of the BSTDB and the Development Bank of Austria.



BLACK SEA REGIONAL ECONOMIC FORUM TO MARK THE 10th ANNIVERSARY OF BSTDB

On 14 June 2009, the BSTDB will mark the 10th anniversary of its developmental activities in the region. To highlight this important milestone, BSTDB will organize a high-level Regional Economic Forum focusing on the current economic situation and short to mid-term prospects for the region.

Invited participants to the event include Ministers of Economy and Finance and Central Bank Governors from the Bank's member countries, high-level representatives of major IFIs active in the region, bilateral donors, and international banking and business leaders interested in the Black Sea region. The Forum will be held within the framework of the Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the BSTDB, in the host town of Thessaloniki.

BSTDB VICE PRESIDENT BANKING SPEAKS AT THE BLACK SEA CONFERENCE ON REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Andrey KONDAKOV, BSTDB Vice President Banking, took part in the plenary session of the Black Sea Conference on Regional Integration and Inclusive Growth, organized jointly by the Government of the Hellenic Republic and the World Bank in Athens, on 23-24 February. Discussing the challenges and opportunities in the regional economy, KONDAKOV touched upon the key issues of restoring flexibility in the financial food chain and the challenges of access to financing for the Black Sea region. The conference was attended by government officials of the countries in the region, representatives of the World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Council of Europe and the European Commission, leading universities and NGOs.



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION (PABSEC)

PABSEC COMMITTEES ADDRESS ASPECTS OF CHILD PROTECTION, MIGRATION AND SEA TRANSPORT

In March and April 2009, the three PABSEC Committees debated and drafted recommendations on topics of major importance for the countries of the Black Sea region.

The Thirty-Second Meeting of the Economic, Commercial, Technological and Environmental Affairs Committee took place in Belgrade on 18-19 March. Reşat DOGRU, Member of the Committee (Turkey), presented a Draft Report on "Development of Sea Transport in the BSEC Member States: Problems and Perspectives", while a Draft Recommendation on the same subject was presented by Gagik MINASYAN, Chairman of the Committee (Armenia).

The Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee held its Thirty-Second Meeting in Batumi on 7-8 April. The members of the Committee discussed the Draft

Report and the Draft Recommendation on "Migration in the BSEC Member States - Social and Cultural Aspects". The said drafts were presented by Nikolay POZHITKOV, Member of the Committee (Russia) and Alexandros DERMENTZOPOULOS, Chairman of the Committee (Greece), respectively. A Draft Recommendation was also presented by Alexander BEDNOV, Member of the Committee (Russia), on the need to protect children from commercial exploitation.

The Legal and Political Affairs Committee held its Thirty-Third Meeting in the city of Manisa in Turkey, on 29-30 April. The main item on the agenda of the meeting was "Migration in the BSEC Member States - Legal Aspects". The Rapporteur was Paata DAVITAI, Member of the Committee (Georgia). Michael YEMELIANOV, Chairman of the Committee (Russia), presented the Draft Recommendation on this subject.

THIRTY-THIRD PLENARY SESSION OF THE PABSEC GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN BUCHAREST TO ADDRESS THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FINANCIAL CRISIS IN THE REGION

The PABSEC will hold the Thirty-Third Plenary Session of its General Assembly in Bucharest on 11-13 June. The General Debate will provide an opportunity for the speakers and heads of national delegations to address the issue of strategies and policies aiming to diminish the consequences of the financial and economic crisis in the BSEC Member States.

The members of the Assembly will have debates on the Reports and Recommendations drafted by the PABSEC specialized Committees during their spring meetings. The Assembly Members will then adopt the Recommendations on these subjects addressed to the Parliaments and Governments of the Member Countries and to the Organization of the BSEC.

Furthermore, the General Assembly is expected to consider the results of the 20th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States held in Yerevan on 16 April, as well as of the Ministerial Meetings organized during the Armenian Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC.

In Bucharest, the PABSEC members will also consider the Progress Report of the Parliamentary Assembly, adopt the Auditing Report for 2008 and elect four Vice-Presidents of the Assembly.

PABSEC'S INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

PABSEC Secretary General Alexey KUDRIAVTSEV and Deputy Secretary General Igor BOLBOCEANU paid a working visit to the International Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) in Malta on 15-17 December 2008. They had discussions with Sergio PIAZZI, PAM Secretary General, concerning ways of developing cooperation between the two Parliamentary Assemblies. The discussions continued at the PABSEC International Secretariat in Istanbul on 30 January, during the visit of Secretary General PIAZZI to Istanbul.

On the other hand, Alexander BEDNOV, Member of the PABSEC Russian Delegation, participated in the 58th Plenary Session of the Assembly of the Western European Union (AWEU) in Paris on 25 November 2008. A PABSEC delegation comprised of PABSEC Vice-President and Head of the PABSEC Georgian Delegation Mikheil MACHAVARIANI, PABSEC Vice-President Alexander DZASOHOV and PABSEC Deputy Secretary General Alexander FURMAN attended the first part of the 2009 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 26-30 January in Strasbourg.

Within the framework of enhancing cooperation with the European Parliament both at the political and administrative levels, a PABSEC International Secretariat representative paid a study visit to the European Parliament in Brussels in March, which included participation in the Joint Conference of the International Labour Office (ILO) and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on "Civil Society in the Black Sea region and the Eastern Partnership Countries" on 2-3 March.



BSEC BUSINESS COUNCIL

THE BSEC BUSINESS COUNCIL AND BARRIERS TO TRADE

One of the core elements of the BSEC Business Council strategy has been the development of horizontal measures that will ensure a smooth trading, business and investment environment for all businesspeople in the region. It has established, among others, a special Task Force dedicated to non-tariff trade barriers and other issues pertaining to trade facilitation.

In that framework, the BSEC Business Council has set up a section in its web site dedicated to the reporting of barriers and is inviting businesspeople to register the problems they face when exporting to other countries in the region. The Business Council has also consulted with the Market Access Unit of the EU DG Trade on the best ways to gather reliable data on trade barriers from the countries in the region.

As is known, in 2008, the BSEC Business Council conducted a preliminary survey, through written questionnaires, on the non-tariff barriers and other obstacles that are preventing the businesspeople of the region from realizing their full export potential with other countries in the region. Below is a consolidated summary of the results of this preliminary survey.

- Long waiting times at border crossings
- Non-standardized foreign trade documents and procedures
- Bureaucratic import / export / transit procedures
- Non-transparent customs procedures
- Lack of consistency among various customs offices in a country with regards to the phytosanitary certificates required
- Bilateral disputes
- Difficulties in obtaining visas
- Inadequate flow of information among the contracting parties
- Inferior transport and logistical infrastructure
- Shortage of accredited laboratories for testing and issuing certificates

- Lack of clarity regarding pharmaceutical product registrations
- Insufficient quantity of bilateral transport licenses
- Prevalent practice in certain countries of performing import-export activities through intermediaries, adding to transaction costs

In most cases, the responses to the survey reflected basic and general problems such as bureaucracy and lack of infrastructure. The survey did not reveal the existence of many technical barriers that would be protectionist in nature. The participants to the survey showed a certain degree of reluctance to share exact information about their problems either not to disclose competitive information or out of concern of affecting their relations with the authorities concerned.

The BSEC Business Council plans to review the results of the survey and to establish, in the form of a public-private cooperation mechanism, a system for a more thorough understanding and monitoring of the trade barriers in the region as well as to reach an internal agreement on how to best tackle them during the future sessions of the BSEC Working Group on Trade and Economic Development.

Getting information on trade barriers is a never-ending process and the Business Council continues asking businesspeople to report on any problem they face in their export activities. Moreover, it is now felt that the scope of the survey should be extended geographically and information should also be sought on the problems that the region's businesspeople are facing when trading with other countries outside the region. In the middle of the current crisis there is increasing talk of various countries becoming tempted to raise their protective trade fences in favor of their own businesspeople. The BSEC Business Council strongly believes that such a reversal of the globalization process would be deleterious for all business and industry, and remains strongly committed to the principles of free trade.



INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR BLACK SEA STUDIES (ICBSS)

2nd International Black Sea Symposium

30.6. – 5.7.2009

2nd INTERNATIONAL BLACK SEA SYMPOSIUM: "THE BLACK SEA REGION: THE STATE OF PLAY AND THE WAY FORWARD"

Building on the success of last year's event, the ICBSS will host the 2nd International Black Sea Symposium on "The Black Sea Region: the State of Play and the Way Forward" on the island of Kalymnos, Dodecanese/Greece, on 30 June - 5 July 2009.

The International Black Sea Symposium (IBSS) provides a forum for study, dialogue and networking in a multicultural and interdisciplinary environment, thus contributing to understanding and cooperation in the Black Sea region and beyond. Young professionals primarily from the countries of the wider Black Sea area, EU member states, the United States and Central Asia are the target group of the Symposium. The participants will have the opportunity to learn about issues of importance for the future development of the Black Sea region during a four-day intensive course of interactive sessions led by prominent experts. Sessions will alternate with conflict resolution workshops guided by expert facilitator Prof. Benjamin Broome of the Arizona State University.

For more information, please visit the ICBSS website www.icbss.org or contact the ICBSS at symposium@icbss.org.

ICBSS PROJECTS

Commission on the Black Sea joint project launched



A joint project has been launched by the ICBSS and the Commission on the Black Sea in January. The project aims to contribute to a joint vision and common strategy for the Black Sea region. Within the framework of the project, the Commission will elaborate a comprehensive study on the future of the region and will make policy recommendations targeted at the key stakeholders. The four core themes to be addressed are democracy, socio-economic welfare, regional cooperation and security. The project was launched in cooperation with the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation, a project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States (Romania), Bertelsmann Stiftung (Germany) and the International Policy Research Institute of the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey.

Fostering Cooperation in Science and Technology



The S&T International Cooperation Network for Eastern European and Central Asian countries (IncoNet EECA), a project coordinated by the ICBSS, is now in its second year, progressing well with many upcoming events. For more information, please visit www.inco-eeeca.net.



The ICBSS is now also participating as a partner in the newly launched project 'Networking on Science and Technology in the Black Sea region' (BS-ERA.NET) which is coordinated by the National Centre for Programme Management (CNMP) of Romania.

Both projects are co-funded under the EU's Seventh Framework Programme for Research (FP7).

Selected Publications

The ICBSS continues to produce important publications on issues related to the region. The latest ICBSS publications include:

Tsantoulis, Yannis. *Black Sea Synergy and Eastern Partnership: Different Centres of Gravity, Complementarity or Confusing Signals?* ICBSS Policy Brief, no. 12. Athens: ICBSS, February 2009.

Japaridze, Tedo. *A Memo on How to Make the EU – BSEC Relations Relevant and Productive.* ICBSS Policy Brief, no. 11. Athens: ICBSS, February 2009.

Ladi, Stella. *Good Governance and Public Administration Reform in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Member States.* Xenophon Paper, no. 6. Athens: ICBSS, December 2008.

Yakis, Yasar. *The Black Sea and the Georgian Crisis.* ICBSS Policy Brief, no. 10. Athens: ICBSS, December 2008.

Manoli, Panagiota and Stelios Stavridis. *An Emerging Euro – Black Sea Parliamentary Dimension? Contributing to the Black Sea Synergy.* ICBSS Policy Brief, no. 9. Athens: ICBSS, December 2008.

The said publications are all available for free download from www.icbss.org.

BSEC PROJECT DEVELOPMENT FUND (PDF)

The PDF Steering Committee met in January and approved the final deliverables of six PDF projects that have been successfully completed. The said projects are:

- 1) "An Electronic Marketplace to support Pairs of Less Widely Studied European Languages (WISE)";
- 2) "Operational Framework of an advanced Telematics based Institute, for promotion of services on sustainable development in ICZM (Integrated Coastal Zone Management) (CORAL)";
- 3) "Study of the Capacities and Requirements of Operational Client-Server Health Information System for Diabetes (Tele-Diab)";
- 4) "Study of Science and Technological Park Activities as a Black Sea Regional Pole of Development (TECHPARK)";
- 5) "Network of Integrated Circuit Design Teaching Centers in Black Sea Region";
- 6) "Improvement of the scientific background for assuring sustainable development in the Black Sea coastal zone - pre-feasibility study".

NEW PDF MANUAL OF OPERATIONS BRINGS IMPROVEMENTS

The new Manual of Operations of the BSEC Project Development Fund which was approved at the 19th Meeting of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Tirana in October 2008, will bring significant improvements by raising the eligibility of PDF projects for Grants to 30,000 Euros. However, the payment procedure for applications approved has been changed to 60% upon the signing of a Grant contract and 40% following the approval of the final deliverables and proofs of expenditure by the Steering Committee.

In order to make PDF project applications more relevant to the activities of BSEC, the new Manual requires from the BSEC Working Groups to provide clear direction to projects by defining their priority project areas and time frames according to their Action Plans

and relevant policy decisions. In that way, applicants will be required to submit project applications complying with these priority areas and hence implement regional projects that are able to contribute more effectively to the BSEC activities in each area of cooperation. Also, according to the new Manual, PDF Applications should be submitted to the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat at least three weeks before the corresponding Working Group meeting.

However, following the approval of the new PDF Manual, BSEC is modifying the PDF technical documents and therefore applications cannot be submitted at the current stage. For more information, visit www.bsecprojects.com.

TURKEY CONTRIBUTES TO PDF

With the approval of the new Manual of Operations, BSEC has introduced a new three-year period of voluntary contributions (2009-2011) setting the target of 30,000 Euros for contributions by each Member State to the PDF. In this regard, the Republic of Turkey was the first BSEC Member State to transfer in March 2009 its voluntary contribution of 30,000 Euros to the Fund.

BSEC HELLENIC DEVELOPMENT FUND SOON TO BECOME OPERATIONAL

Following the approval of its Guidelines by the 19th Meeting of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Tirana in October 2008, the HDF is currently elaborating its internal rules and technical documents with a view to becoming fully operational in the near future. Meanwhile, the Hellenic Republic has transferred an initial amount of 500,000 Euros to the Fund.



FROM THE BSEC PERMANENT INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT (PERMIS)

BSEC ENERGY MINISTERS MEET

The 6th Meeting of BSEC Ministers of Energy was held in Yerevan on 20 March. The meeting was preceded by a two-day meeting of the BSEC Working Group on Energy. The Ministerial Meeting followed the main issues discussed and agreed upon during previous meeting of the Ministers in Kyiv in April 2008. Among others, the topics discussed included the elaboration of a Joint BSEC-EU Plan of Action in Energy; issues pertaining to the effectiveness and efficiency of cooperation, including the improvement of the modalities of cooperation, in the sphere of energy; the state of implementation of the regional energy study; the elaboration of the long-term regional strategy on energy; cooperation with international agencies in the implementation of the regional energy projects.

The Ministers adopted the "Yerevan Declaration on Cooperation in Energy", in which they emphasized the need for:

- collective efforts towards the elaboration of a common approach to energy security in the wider Black Sea area;
- the development of inter-system connections of the energy markets of the BSEC Member States with the aim to further integrate them, as well as to diminish the individual risks of the countries;
- the development of infrastructure to ensure the integration of the energy markets of the BSEC and the EU member states, the diversification of energy supplies and the enhancement of energy security both at the national level, as well as at the level of the BSEC and the EU;
- the development of cooperation with the Energy Community;
- the elaboration of projects of common interest for the BSEC and the EU in the sectors of oil, gas and electricity.

The meeting was attended by the representatives of the EU Presidency, EU countries with Observer status in BSEC, the USAID, the Energy Charter Secretariat, as well as other guests.



6th Meeting of BSEC Ministers of Energy in Yerevan.

BSEC MINISTERS OF TRANSPORT DISCUSS DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSPORT COOPERATION

The Ministers of Transport of the BSEC Member States held a meeting in Yerevan on 27 March. The participants noted the developments in transport cooperation in BSEC since their last meeting in Odessa in April 2008.

The Ministers discussed the current prospects for BSEC activities on transport interconnections between Europe and the Black Sea region. They agreed to further exert joint efforts for promoting sustainable and efficient transport operations. They also decided to realize concrete projects on the coordinated development of the Black Sea Ring Highway, as identified by the respective Memorandum of Understanding. They agreed to accelerate the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Development of Motorways of the Sea at the BSEC Region through resolving the main conceptual issues and shaping a harmonized approach. The implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods in the BSEC Region was also discussed during the meeting.

The Ministers decided to continue the efforts to organize training seminars and conferences aimed at the exchange of experiences and best practices in the transport sector and also to cooperate closely with the international transport organizations which work for the development of integrated transport networks.

At the end of the meeting, the Ministers adopted the "Joint Declaration on Cooperation in the Sphere of Transport in the BSEC Region".

The meeting proved once again that the Ministerial meetings on transport constitute regular high-level de facto decision making fora with mechanisms for implementation that include the

BSEC Working Group on Transport and related steering committees and expert groups.

As is known, BSEC achieved an excellent precedent when two important Memoranda of Understanding - on the Coordinated Development of the Black Sea Ring Highway and on the Development of the Motorways of the Sea at the BSEC Region - entered into force in a record time of one and a half year in late 2008, following their signing in Belgrade in April 2007. It is expected that the Steering Committee of the Black Sea Ring Highway will convene in mid-June in order to finalize the main route and map of the Highway.

On the other hand, recently, important steps have also been taken by BSEC in the area of the facilitation of the road transport of goods. The Steering Committee on Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods in the BSEC Region, at its meeting in Istanbul in February, elaborated several options on the progressive liberalization of the international road transport of goods, which also includes the establishment of a BSEC permit system, similar to the ICMT, for the road transit of goods. The BSEC Permanent International Secretariat, together with the IRU and BSEC-URTA, have been invited to develop a BSEC permit format and rules for usage to be submitted to the next meeting of the Steering Committee. This BSEC permit format has already been submitted to the BSEC Member States.

The envisaged BSEC permit system is expected to facilitate the work of the road transporters and simplify border crossing procedures in the region. BSEC plans to start implementing this system by the beginning of 2010 on an experimental basis, thus becoming the only regional organization to issue such transit documents.

WORKING GROUP ON BANKING AND FINANCE ADDRESSES THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS

In the midst of the global economic and financial crisis, an important meeting of the BSEC Working Group on Banking and Finance was held in Yerevan on 9-10 April. The Central Banks' representatives from the BSEC Member States exchanged information on the recent developments in the banking and finance sectors, as well as the anti-crisis or stabilization measures introduced in their respective countries. Several Member States have concluded agreements or are currently discussing with the IMF and the World Bank with a view to acquiring the necessary funds to stabilize their markets.

The global financial crisis has caused adverse socio-economic effects in many BSEC countries for which an enhanced coordination and exchange of information at the BSEC level is deemed necessary. At the meeting, to which the World Bank representative also attended, it was agreed that a joint BSEC-World Bank Workshop will help to that effect.

BSEC-EU INTERACTION DISCUSSED IN BRUSSELS

The BSEC-EU informal consultations with the COEST Working Party were held in Brussels on 12 November 2008. The Meeting was chaired by the Armenian Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC and the EU French Presidency. The representatives of all BSEC and EU Member States, as well as the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat, the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) in its capacity as the Coordinator of the Ad Hoc Working Group of BSEC-EU Interaction, the European Commission and the Council of the European Union participated in the meeting.

Issues of formalizing BSEC-EU interaction were discussed. The elaboration of BSEC-EU partnerships and the development of Black Sea Synergy sectoral partnerships in specific priority areas, in particular in the fields of transport and environment, were among the main items on the meeting's agenda. The possible overlapping of various new regional initiatives, namely the Eastern Partnership, was also addressed.

The representative of the EU French Presidency highlighted the importance of the Black Sea area for the EU and stressed a positive vision on the role of BSEC in the region.

In their relevant statements, the representatives of the BSEC Member States and the Secretary General of the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat underlined the need to have consultations with the COEST Working Party on a regular basis and called the forthcoming EU Presidencies to follow the stance of the French Presidency.

ROUNDTABLE ON PROSPECTS FOR ENHANCED BSEC-EU INTERACTION

A Roundtable Discussion on "The BSEC and the EU: prospects for enhanced interaction" was jointly organized by the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat, the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) and the European Policy Centre (EPC) on 29 April at the premises of European Policy Centre in Brussels.

The representatives of the European institutions, as well as experts from various international organizations, research centers, non-governmental organizations and diplomatic missions located in Brussels participated in the event.

Ambassador Leonidas CHRYSANTHOPOULOS, Secretary General of the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat and Dr. Dimitrios TRIANTAPHYLLOU, Director General of the ICBSS presented the main activities and priorities of BSEC and the prospects for BSEC-EU interaction.

During the discussion various references were made to the "Declaration of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation on a BSEC-EU Enhanced Relationship" adopted by the Special Meeting of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 14 February 2008 in Kyiv, where the official common position of the BSEC Member States on the issues of promoting BSEC-EU cooperation and interaction were reflected.

The participants expressed their gratitude to the European Policy Centre for hosting the first ever conference on BSEC in Brussels, with the hope that the event will contribute to the raising of public awareness about one of most important organizations in the region.

BSEC - KAS COOPERATION CONTINUES

The long-standing cooperation between BSEC and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) in Turkey was further strengthened by the jointly organized Workshop titled "Development of Youth Entrepreneurship and Start-ups" in Istanbul on 1-3 April.

The Workshop focused on public and private support for the young entrepreneurs in the BSEC Member States and the development of youth entrepreneurship as part of the national SME policy in the countries in transition, including the tasks of the governments to assist young people in starting a new business.

It is expected that the participants at the Workshop will exchange views and share experiences on national youth policies and promotion of young entrepreneurship in the BSEC Member States. The Workshop will review the impact of normative acts, regulation and policies aimed at promoting entrepreneurial activities for youth, will discuss the implementation of governmental policy in the cross-sectoral dimension of young entrepreneurship and will aim at exchanging best practices in national youth entrepreneurship development programs.

The participants to the Workshop will include the representatives of the BSEC Member States, officials from the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Turkey, members of the Union of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UMU) and Institute of Entrepreneurship in Germany, as well as the representatives of Young Businessmen Association (TUGIAD) and Women Entrepreneurs Association (KAGIDER) in Turkey.



Meeting of the BSEC Working Group on Banking and Finance in Yerevan.

AD HOC GROUP OF EXPERTS ON BSEC-EU INTERACTION MEETS IN ATHENS

The third meeting of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on BSEC-EU Interaction was held in Athens on 30 January.

The participants considered the developments since the last meeting of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts regarding BSEC-EU interaction. Within this framework, they evaluated the results of the BSEC Coordinating Meeting of the Troika in an Open Format and the BSEC-EU informal consultations with the COEST Working Party which were held in Brussels on 11-12 November 2008, as well as the Communication of the European Commission on Eastern Partnership dated 3 December 2008. The participants assessed the impact of these developments on BSEC-EU interaction and the Black Sea Synergy. They agreed that the Ad Hoc Group should continue following the developments in the field of BSEC-EU interaction. Two background documents titled Food for Thought Paper on the State of BSEC-EU Interaction and A Comparative Analysis of the Black Sea Synergy and the Eastern Partnership were presented by the International Centre for Black Sea Studies.

The participants discussed the documents titled Black Sea Regional Strategy (2009-2013): Promoting a Region-wide Interaction between the BSEC and the EU and A Model for Black Sea Sectoral Partnerships, taking into account the proposals and comments of the BSEC Member States and Related Bodies.

BSEC WORKING GROUP ON COOPERATION IN EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE CONVENES

The Meeting of the BSEC Working Group on Cooperation in Emergency Assistance and Liaison Officers of the BSEC Network on Emergency Assistance was held at the BSEC Headquarters in Istanbul on 7-8 April.

The Working Group expressed its sorrow to the Government of the Italian Republic in connection with the earthquake which hit L'Aquila and nearby areas on 6 April and underlined the importance of further strengthening cooperation in the field of emergency prevention and assistance.

The participants provided information regarding their activities on emergency prevention and response. The Working Group underlined the importance of the exercises held in the region on emergency assistance and concluded that the practice of such exercises should be continued. The Working Group also expressed interest in furthering its cooperation with the Black Sea Commission and other international organizations, in particular, with the UN system and the IFRC.

During the meeting, issues related to the commencement of the work of the BSEC Network of Liaison Officers on Emergency Assistance, in particular, the application of the Modalities of Work of the Network and the creation of a Unified Database, were considered. The interested Member States were invited to take part in the "Medical Rescue Teams Project" submitted by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Turkey.

The Working Group expressed its appreciation for the work done by the Russian Federation as Country Coordinator during the 2007-2009 period and welcomed the intention of Russia to continue the coordination of the Working Group for the 2009-2011 term. As it will be recalled, during Russia's term as the Country Coordinator, the Additional Protocol to the Agreement among the Governments of the BSEC Participating States in Cooperation in Emergency Assistance and Emergency Response to Natural and Man-Made Disasters entered into force, the modalities of work for the BSEC Network of Liaison Officers on Emergency Assistance were elaborated, the work of the BSEC Network of Liaison Officers commenced and a number of international exercises on emergency assistance were organized.

SECRETARY GENERAL CHRYSANTHOPOULOS RECEIVED BY PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE



Secretary General CHRYSANTHOPOULOS received by President of Ukraine H.E. Mr. Viktor YUSHCHENKO.

The Secretary General of the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat Ambassador Leonidas CHRYSANTHOPOULOS was received by the President of Ukraine H.E. Mr. Viktor YUSHCHENKO in Istanbul on 20 May.

During their meeting, issues related to the implementation of the projects on the coordinated development of the Black Sea Ring Highway and the development of the Motorways of the Sea in the BSEC Region were discussed.

The Secretary General also stressed the important role that Ukraine plays within BSEC.

FORUM ON COOPERATION OF ASSOCIATIONS OF TRAVEL AND TOURISM AGENCIES OF BSEC MEMBER STATES HELD IN ATHENS

The Forum on the Cooperation of the Travel and Tourism Agencies of the BSEC Member States was held in Athens on 24 November 2008.

The objective of the Forum was the creation of a network of cooperation among the travel and tourism agencies of the BSEC Member States to reinforce tourist exchange in the region and to promote the rich potential of the area as a popular tourism destination for attracting tourists from third countries.

The unanimous adoption of the "Athens Protocol on the Cooperation of the Associations of Travel and Tourism Agencies of the BSEC Member States", prepared by the Ministry of Tourism of the Hellenic Republic, is seen as the beginning of a new path of cooperation in the area of tourism in the Black Sea region.

BSEC SECRETARY GENERAL CHRYSANTHOPOULOS AND UN SECRETARY GENERAL BAN KI-MOON MEET IN ISTANBUL

The Secretary General of the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat Ambassador Leonidas CHRYSANTHOPOULOS held consultations with the Secretary General of the United Nations BAN Ki-moon on 6 April, on the margins of the Second Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations held in Istanbul. This constituted the first bilateral meeting between the Secretaries General of the two Organizations.

During the meeting, the enhanced cooperation existing between BSEC and the UN the recent developments within BSEC, including developments related to the BSEC transport infrastructure projects, and the efforts of BSEC to contribute to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in the BSEC Region were discussed.

As it will be recalled, BSEC was granted Observer status by the UN General Assembly back in 1999. After that, the UN General Assembly Resolution 55/211 of 20 December 2000 on the Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation opened up new avenues for BSEC to develop working relationships with other organizations within the UN system.

Since then, BSEC has signed Cooperation Agreements with the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), UN Environment Programme (UNEP), UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and UN Development Programme (UNDP). BSEC has also developed cooperation with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Trade Organization (WTO), World Bank, UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

BSEC-UN cooperation has produced many concrete projects, including the ongoing Black Sea Trade and Investment Promotion Programme (BSTIP) project with the UNDP, the BSEC Regional Action Plan for "Strengthening the Criminal Justice Response to Trafficking in Persons in the Black Sea Region" prepared in cooperation with the UNODC, the regional conference held in Mamaia, Romania in 2008 on countering human trafficking organized jointly with the UNODC, the joint BSEC-

IOM project on migration management and cooperation with the UN Industrial Development Organization International Centre for Hydrogen Energy Technologies (UNIDO-ICHET) in the areas of energy and the environment.

The UN General Assembly has continued to adopt every two years Resolutions on Cooperation between the UN and BSEC, reflecting the many dimensions of the cooperation which have developed over the years between the two Organizations.



Secretary General of the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat Ambassador Leonidas CHRYSANTHOPOULOS with UN Secretary General BAN Ki-moon.

TURKISH FOREIGN MINISTER VISITS BSEC HEADQUARTERS

While in Istanbul, H.E. Mr. Ahmet DAVUTOĞLU, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, paid an impromptu visit to the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat and held informal talks with Secretary General Ambassador Leonidas CHRYSANTHOPOULOS on 29 May.

The Secretary General briefly informed the Turkish Minister of the two main transport projects of BSEC - namely, the projects on the coordinated development of the Black Sea Ring Highway and the development of the Motorways of the Sea in the BSEC Region. Other developments regarding the work of the Organization were also discussed.

During the meeting, the Turkish Foreign Minister stressed the importance that Turkey attributes to BSEC as the only full-fledged and the most inclusive cooperation organization in the region.

The two sides agreed to hold formal consultations at a later stage.



Secretary General CHRYSANTHOPOULOS with Turkish Foreign Minister H.E. Mr. Ahmet DAVUTOĞLU.

BSEC SECRETARY GENERAL MEETS WITH IRANIAN DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER

The Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS Ambassador Leonidas CHRYSANTHOPOULOS received the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran H.E. Dr. Ali AHANI at the BSEC Headquarters on 27 May.

The Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister expressed his appreciation to BSEC for granting his country Sectoral Dialogue Partnership status and promised that Iran would be an active participant within BSEC.

He also expressed his willingness to assist BSEC in establishing relations with other regional organizations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, ECO and others in which Iran participates.

The Secretary General welcomed the positive approach of Iran towards BSEC and underlined the importance of Iran's participation as a Sectoral Dialogue Partner in BSEC. He then briefed the Deputy Foreign Minister on recent developments within BSEC and on the two transport infrastructure projects of the Organization.



Members of the Board of Directors of the German-Bulgarian Chamber of Industry and Commerce during their working visit to the BSEC Headquarters



Secretary General CHRYSANTHOPOULOS with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister H.E. Dr. Ali AHANI.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE GERMAN-BULGARIAN CHAMBER OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE ORGANIZE A VISIT TO THE BSEC HEADQUARTERS

Members of the Board of Directors of the German-Bulgarian Chamber of Industry and Commerce paid a special visit to the BSEC Headquarters on 12 May. The delegation also included the Ambassador of Germany to Bulgaria H.E. Mr. Michael GEIER. The Board Members were given a detailed briefing on the history, objectives, work and role of BSEC by Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Aliosha NEDELICHEV. Information was also provided on BSEC financial instruments, namely the Project Development Fund and the BSEC Hellenic Development Fund. BSEC-EU interaction was among the topics of discussion.

ERASMUS STUDENTS VISIT BSEC HEADQUARTERS

A group of Turkish and foreign graduate and post-graduate students as well as exchange students within the framework of the Erasmus programme visited the BSEC Headquarters on 2 February. The visit was organized jointly with the International Relations Department of the Istanbul-based Kültür University Foreign Policy Platform.

The students were given a comprehensive briefing on the objectives, roles, work, activities and projects of BSEC by the representative of the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat, which was followed by an interactive discussion and a question-answer session. The Foreign Policy Platform of the Kültür University has expressed its wish to continue organizing such visits with the participation of new graduate and post-graduate student groups coming to Turkey under the Erasmus programme.



Erasmus programme students during their visit to the BSEC Headquarters.



Ambassador SUNGAR and Ambassador EFENDIEV were presented with plaques, in recognition of their valuable contributions to the Organization.

BSEC PERMIS STAFF BID FAREWELL TO OUTGOING DEPUTIES SECRETARY GENERAL

A special farewell was organized by the staff members of the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS) in honor of First Deputy Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS Ambassador Murat SUNGAR (Turkey) and Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Altai EFENDIEV (Azerbaijan), the terms of office of whom ended on 30 April.

Ambassador SUNGAR has served as the First Deputy Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS during the period of 1 May 2006 - 30 April 2009. Ambassador EFENDIEV, on the other hand, was the Deputy Secretary General in the 1 May 2004 - 30 April 2009 period. Ambassador SUNGAR and Ambassador EFENDIEV were presented with plaques, in recognition of their valuable contributions to the Organization.

Ambassador Sumru NOYAN (Turkey) has been appointed as the new First Deputy Secretary General, while Ambassador Traian CHEBELEU (Romania) has taken over the duties of Ambassador EFENDIEV as the Deputy Secretary General of BSEC PERMIS for a three-year term as of 1 May 2009, until 30 April 2012.