

Black Sea NEWS

No: 21 • November 2009

The Newsletter of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation under the supervision of BSEC Permanent International Secretariat sponsored by the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank

BSEC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS MEETS IN BAKU

The 21st Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) was held in Baku on 22 October 2009. The meeting was hosted by the Republic of Azerbaijan. His Excellency Mr. Elmar MAMMADYAROV, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, chaired the meeting in his capacity as the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization.

The 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 in and delivered statements at the meeting.

In the working session of the meeting, the Ministers exchanged views on issues of common concern to the region. It was stressed that existing conflicts in the BSEC region impede comprehensive cooperation among the Member States.

The Ministers examined various measures to further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of BSEC. Within this framework, they decided to move towards a two-year Chairmanship sequence - one starting in January and one in July, instead of the existing practice whereby the terms cover the periods of May-October and November-April, resulting in three countries consecutively undertaking the responsibilities of

Chairmanship during the course of a year.

The Ministers also addressed issues such as the use of BSEC financial instruments - namely, the Project Development Fund and the Hellenic Development Fund - for projects of regional impact. Topics such as the appointment of Country-Coordinator for various BSEC Working Groups, review of the state of cooperation among the Member States, the status of implementation of BSEC Council Resolutions, Decisions and Recommendations and BSEC-EU interaction were also on the agenda of the meeting. The BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs considered the applications for the renewal of Observer status and the granting and renewal of Sectoral Dialogue Partnership status to various countries and organizations at its meeting in Baku. In this context, Sectoral Dialogue Partnership status was granted to the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR), the Union of Road Transport Associations in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Region (BSEC-URTA) and the Regional Commonwealth in the Field of Communications (RCC).

At the conclusion of the meeting, a ceremony took place whereby Azerbaijan handed over the Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC to Bulgaria. The Republic of Bulgaria officially assumed the Chairmanship as of 1 November 2009, which will end 31 May 2010.



Interview with
H.E. Dr. Rumiana Jeleva,
Chairperson-in-Office of BSEC,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the
Republic of Bulgaria

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

R.JELEVA: During its Chairmanship Bulgaria shall highlight the efforts for making the Organization more visible and more effective, opening it for a closer cooperation with the European Union, and also for drawing the European Union's attention more actively to the problems of BSEC.

Our concrete goals are creating a website of the Bulgarian Chairmanship, publishing news and articles in printed and electronic periodicals and informing the media for the events during the Chairmanship. This will increase the visibility of the Bulgarian policy in the Black Sea region and will popularize the Organization's initiatives and projects to the wide audience.

The Bulgarian Chairmanship shall aim to consolidate BSEC as the most authentic, representative and institutionally developed intergovernmental organization in the Black Sea region. In this sense, the Bulgarian Chairmanship will continue the debate in the framework of the Working Group on Organizational Matters on the measures proposed by Bulgaria for increasing the efficiency of BSEC, that is, above all, improving the overall functioning of the Permanent International Secretariat and the sessions of the Committee of Senior Officials and along with that, increasing the efficiency of the Working Groups and prioritizing and bringing more dynamics to the sectorial partnerships.

The Bulgarian Chairmanship shall aim to draw the European Union's attention to the Black Sea region. The BSEC-European Union interaction should be directed towards a pragmatic, project-orientated cooperation for resolving the most outstanding issues in the economic development of the region and this will inevitably foster dialogue and better mutual understanding. I believe that three directions in the European Union-BSEC dialogue are essential; firstly, the effective participation of the European Commission as an Observer in BSEC; secondly, joint meetings in Brussels in the framework of COEST; thirdly, sectorial partnerships in the framework of the Black Sea Synergy.

BS NEWS: What highlight events will be organized during the Chairmanship of Bulgaria?

R.JELEVA: Bulgaria is the Country-Coordinator of the BSEC Working Groups on Energy and on Science and Technology.

What I can confirm is that, during the Bulgarian Chairmanship the Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria will organize a Meeting of the Working Group on Energy and a Ministerial Meeting in Sofia entitled "Development of the Black Sea Regional Energy Market and its Integration in the European Community".

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H.E. Mr. Elmar MAMMADYAROV, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, BSEC Chairman-in-Office, addressing the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Baku.



Azerbaijan handing over the Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC to Bulgaria in Baku on 22 October 2009.



Family photo at the 21st Meeting of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Baku.

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Furthermore, in accordance with the agreements with Romania and Greece, Bulgaria has undertaken to be a leading country on the partnership on energy. In this respect, three concept papers have been submitted to the European Commission (EC) ("Creating a Network for Preparation and Applying for Financing of Projects in the Area of Energy", "Creating Stable Energy Communities", "Transparency in the Energy Sector"). We are currently expecting the position of DG Energy of the EC.

Moreover, during the Bulgarian Chairmanship a Meeting of the Working Group on Science and Technology will take place, followed by a Meeting of the Ministers in charge of Science and Technology of the BSEC Member States.

Indeed, the Bulgarian Chairmanship shall concentrate on the organization of meetings of the working groups and ministerial meetings in other areas as well.

A Meeting of the Working Group on Tourism and a Seminar on Tourism are foreseen to take place in Bulgaria in December 2009.

Finally, in the "soft-law security measures" area a working visit to the Black Sea Border Coordination and Information Centre in Bourgas is foreseen in April 2010.

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

R.JELEVA: I would like to emphasize the fact that Bulgaria is a co-founder of BSEC. The BSEC Charter was ratified by the National Assembly on 28 October 1998. Through its participation in BSEC, Bulgaria aims to realize a number of foreign-political priorities. Our objective is to strengthen the trust, stability and security in the region through the economic instruments, defined in the BSEC Charter. We are looking for ways to realize the regional economic interests of Bulgaria by cooperating with the countries in the region. We attach a great importance to the need of creating a favorable economic environment for resolving the "frozen conflicts" in the region without the direct engagement of BSEC.

In this line of thoughts, since Bulgaria is a Member State of both the EU and the BSEC, the country's regional priorities took new dimensions, prompted by the responsibilities which we have undertaken for the realization of EU's European Neighborhood Policy in its eastern dimension; the fact that Bulgaria functions as an "outside border" of the EU and the new important obligations which result from this role; and the focus of EU's attention towards the Black Sea region countries.

According to us, in the medium-term plan, BSEC shall retain its role as a regional format for economic and, partly, political dialogue between the Member States. The absence of practical actions for the realization of substantial projects in the Organization's framework will decrease the interest of the international factors for cooperation with BSEC.

In sum, Bulgaria's participation in BSEC will continue to be determined by the country's regional policy and the EU's community policy regarding the Black Sea region. Bulgaria will actively participate in finding the balance between the Eastern Partnership and the Black Sea Synergy as two dimensions of a coherent European Neighborhood Policy.

Last but not least, I believe that our efforts should be directed towards limiting the confrontation on political matters and accentuating the sectorial partnerships.

editorial

Dear Readers,

The global financial crisis and its implications in the region continue to be on the agenda of BSEC. On 8 October 2009, a joint BSEC-World Bank Workshop was held in Istanbul to address the issue. Assessments on the situation within BSEC were made by the World Bank, the European Central Bank and the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB). According to the results, the Black Sea Region had the second largest growth rate in the world before the crisis, but today it has the fastest declining growth rate and is the most severely hit region by the crisis in comparison to the other regions of the world, with three million BSEC citizens joining the unemployment pool and thirteen million more living in poverty. The conclusions of this workshop and the ways and means to tackle the effects of the crisis will be further examined by the BSEC Working Group on Banking and Finance.

An informal meeting of the BSEC Ministers of Foreign Affairs was held on the sidelines of the 64th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, on 25 September 2009. The meeting allowed the participants to exchange views on issues related to the region and the BSEC cooperation process. It has become customary practice for the BSEC Foreign Ministers to convene in an informal format every year in New York during this time.

Efforts to further improve the effectiveness of our Organization marked the Chairmanship-in-Office of Azerbaijan. Within this framework, during the 21st Meeting of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Baku on 22 October 2009, a decision was made to move towards a two-per-year Chairmanship sequence - one starting in January and one in July. Thus, another item of the Guidelines on Improvement of the BSEC Efficiency that were adopted at the 19th Council Meeting in Tirana on 23 October 2008 was implemented. Bulgaria, which has taken over the Chairmanship-in-Office from Azerbaijan on 1 November will finish



its term at the end of May 2010 and will hand over the gavel to the Hellenic Republic.

The Bulgarian Chairmanship views increasing the visibility and effectiveness of the Organization as a continued priority. Bulgaria, which is an EU member at the same time, will also work on promoting BSEC-EU relations during its Chairmanship. BSEC attributes importance to revitalizing the Black Sea Synergy and we hope to see concrete results in this direction in 2010.

As the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat, we welcome the newcomers to the Secretariat. First Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Ms. Sumru NOYAN (Turkey), whose extensive background in international organizations you will have the opportunity to read about in the coming pages, and Executive Manager Ambassador Mr. Petrit BUSHATI (Albania), who also has a profound experience and knowledge in international relations, will surely make valuable contributions to increasing the effectiveness of the Secretariat.

In the meantime, the BSEC Hellenic Development Fund has been fully launched as of 1 November 2009 and it will enhance BSEC's capacity to finance regional projects, starting with the areas of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency. Once again, we extend our thanks to the Hellenic Republic for its important contribution to our Organization.

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)



FROM THE BSEC PERMANENT INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT (PERMIS)

MINISTERIAL MEETING ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES HELD IN BAKU

The BSEC Ministers of Information and Communication Technologies met in Baku on 4 November 2009.

The meeting was co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Ali ABBASOV, Minister of Communications and IT of the Republic of Azerbaijan and H.E. Mr. Mahmud MAMMAD-GULIYEV, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

During the meeting, the heads of the participating delegations discussed the current situation and prospects of cooperation in the sphere of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the BSEC Region. They also exchanged views on BSEC cooperation with international organizations in this area.

A Joint Declaration was adopted at the end of the meeting. It envisages cooperation in the development of ICT and the preparation of joint projects for the introduction of new ICT

applications in different areas, making use of the BSEC Project Development Fund.

The promotion of realization of joint regional and international ICT backbone network projects for the efficient use and further development of existing infrastructure, including the Azerbaijani initiative on Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway and the Black Sea Interconnection Project coordinated by Turkey, was also agreed upon.

The Declaration also covers areas such as cooperation in frequency coordination; promotion of contacts among ICT administrations, regulatory authorities, operators and the private sector; exchange of information and experts; promotion of programs for disposal and recycling of discarded ICT hardware and parts to protect the environment; development of cooperation with international organizations; as well as the possibility of developing cooperation in the field of satellite technologies in the future.

BSEC MINISTERS AND HEADS OF AGENCIES ON EMERGENCY SITUATIONS MEET IN BAKU

The Ministers and Heads of Agencies on Emergency Situations of the BSEC Member States held a meeting in Baku on 18 September 2009.

At the conclusion of the meeting, a Joint Declaration was adopted, envisaging cooperation in different dimensions of emergency preparedness and management. For the participants, the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Azerbaijan demonstrated a large-scale training exercise on emergencies with the involvement of land, marine and air rescue forces. The observing participants noted the high level of qualifications shown by the Azerbaijani rescuers during the exercise.

INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE IN ATHENS ADDRESSES ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The Second International Scientific Conference "Black Sea Energy and Climate Change" took place in Athens on 8-9 October 2009. The Conference was held under the auspices of the Azerbaijani Chairmanship of BSEC and organized by the Energy Policy and Development Centre (KEPA). The two-day conference highlighted issues in energy and climate change,

particularly in relation to policy, clean energy technologies, electrical networks, renewable energy sources, hydrocarbons and regional projects. The conference brought together scientists and researchers from the BSEC region and beyond. More than 65 abstract papers from 25 countries were submitted.

BSEC-WORLD BANK WORKSHOP ON FINANCIAL CRISIS REACHES IMPORTANT CONCLUSIONS

A joint BSEC-World Bank Workshop on the global financial crisis was organized in Istanbul on 8 October 2008, with the support of the BSTDB.

Assessments on the situation within BSEC were made by the World Bank, the European Central Bank and the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB). According to the conclusions, the Black Sea Region had the second largest growth rate in the world before the crisis, while today it has the fastest declining growth rate and is the most severely hit region by the crisis in the world, with three million BSEC citizens joining the unemployment pool and thirteen million more living in poverty. The conclusions of the workshop and the possible ways of tackling the effects of the crisis will be further examined by the BSEC Working Group on Banking and Finance.

In addition to establishing important conclusions that have implications on the common efforts in analyzing and mitigating the effects of the global economic crisis in the Black Sea Region, the Workshop is also widely viewed to catalyze the activation of BSEC-World Bank cooperation, as well as a contribution to the strengthening of regional cooperation in the sphere of banking and finance.

ENERGY SECTOR ASSESSED IN THE BSEC MEMBER STATES

A seminar titled "Energy View of BSEC Countries - 2008: A Regional Approach" was held in Baku on 30 September - 1 October 2009. The event was organized within the framework of the publication "Energy View of BSEC Countries 2008," the third such annual edition that analyzes the energy and climate sector in the 12 BSEC Member States.

The seminar which was sponsored by Hellenic Aid and promoted by the Ministry of Industry and Energy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, was organized by the Azerbaijan Oil Academy Institute "Geotechnical problems of oil, gas and chemistry" (GPOGC) and the Energy Policy and Development Centre (KEPA) of the University of Athens (NKUA), the coordinator of PROMITHEAS-2 - the Energy and Climate Policy Network.

The seminar focused on the energy outlook and the perspectives of BSEC, environmental protection, energy efficiency and climate change and the prospects for regional projects.

BSEC PERMIS WELCOMES NEW FIRST DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL



Ambassador Sumru NOYAN, the new First Deputy Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS, is the first female to take over a directorial post at the Secretariat.

Ambassador Sumru NOYAN (Turkey) assumed her duties as the new First Deputy Secretary General of the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat on 1 July 2009, replacing her predecessor Ambassador Murat SUNGAR (Turkey). Ambassador NOYAN was appointed as First Deputy Secretary General by the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Yerevan on 16 April 2009, thus becoming the first female to take over a directorial post at the Secretariat.

A career diplomat, she held a number of diplomatic postings, including in Belgrade, Düsseldorf and the Permanent Mission of Turkey to UNESCO in Paris. Before joining the BSEC PERMIS, she was serving as the most senior woman at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Vienna for 12 years.

As the Director of Operations and Deputy Executive Director of the UNODC, she was responsible for coordinating the

activities of the 21 UNODC field offices around the world and the work of a team of specialist staff in Vienna covering a wide and challenging spectrum of areas including drug and human trafficking, organized transnational crime, drug abuse prevention and treatment, rule of law, corruption, money laundering, criminal justice reform, law enforcement, alternative development, crime prevention and violence against women. She raised international awareness on HIV/AIDS among injecting drug users and in prisons, turning UNODC into the seventh co-sponsoring organization of UNAIDS.

"Unfortunately, the Black Sea region is a major transit route, destination and source for the trafficking of women and children for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. According to the UNODC database on global human trafficking patterns, human trafficking affects all BSEC Member States. Human trafficking is a crime which, by nature, has a transnational character and is highly damaging to human security and sustainable development. The challenge for all countries, rich and poor, is to target the criminals who exploit desperate people and to protect and assist victims of trafficking and smuggled migrants, many of whom endure unimaginable hardships in their bid for a better life. BSEC cooperation is very important in this respect" stated Ambassador NOYAN, underlining the importance of the regional combat against organized crime and of the implementation of the Agreement Among the Governments of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Participating States on Cooperation in Combating Crime, in Particular in its Organized Forms, with its two Additional Protocols.

"In addition to the fight against organized crime, I will also support result-oriented activities and initiatives which could revitalize and increase the visibility of BSEC" added Ambassador NOYAN.

As a woman, she highlighted the importance of improving the status of women in the BSEC region. "The situation of women in all the countries in our region needs drastic improvement. There is still a big gender gap in all domains

of life. Unleashing the untapped potential of women in our region is of common interest for the sustainable economic development of all the Black Sea countries. Therefore, I will work on fostering cooperation in the exchange of best practices, so that they may be widely applied" stated Ambassador NOYAN.

Ambassador NOYAN is a Member of the Advisory Council of the Anna Lindh Foundation, an organization supported and resourced by over forty Euro-Mediterranean countries which leads regional initiatives in the Euromed space and promotes activities carried out by organizations based across civil society, advocating a better understanding among people, religions and beliefs.

A native speaker of Turkish, Ambassador NOYAN is fluent in English, French and German. She is married with two children.



Ambassador Sumru NOYAN, a Turkish career diplomat, served for the United Nations for many years, holding critical directorial positions and dealing with new security threats which include terrorism, drug and human trafficking, money-laundering, corruption and HIV/AIDS.

BSEC ACQUIRES OBSERVER STATUS IN DANUBE COMMISSION

At the plenary session of the Danube Commission on 27-29 May 2009 in Budapest, a unanimous decision was taken to grant BSEC Observer status, effective immediately.

The decision taken by the Commission empowered the Secretariat of the Danube Commission to begin negotiations with the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat to

conclude a cooperation agreement between the two organizations.

The decision comes after the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs decided to grant Sectoral Dialogue Partnership status to the Danube Commission in the areas of transport, trade and environmental protection at its meeting in Yerevan on 16 April 2009.

COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS OF THE FORUM OF THE BLACK SEA BROADCASTING REGULATORY AUTHORITIES MEETS IN ANTALYA

Following the decisions taken at the inaugural meeting of the Forum of the Black Sea Broadcasting Regulatory Authorities in 2008, the Committee of Experts of the Forum convened in Antalya on 25-26 June 2009 to elaborate a Draft Charter of the Forum, prepared by the Radio and Television Supreme Council of Turkey (RTÜK).

The next Annual Conference of the Black Sea Broadcasting Regulatory Authorities is scheduled to take place in Athens in 2010.

WORKING GROUPS ON CULTURE AND TOURISM HOLD JOINT MEETING

BSEC Working Groups on Culture and on Cooperation in Tourism held a joint meeting at the BSEC Headquarters in Istanbul, on 15-16 June 2009. This constituted the first joint meeting of the two Working Groups. It provided an opportunity for the participants to tackle issues of common interest for both bodies.

The meeting attracted great interest and was attended by the representatives of the BSEC Member States, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the BSEC Business Council. The representatives of Egypt, as an Observer in BSEC, and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Council of Europe and the Forum of Architects of the Black Sea Region (FABSR), as guests, also participated in the meeting.

Projects mainly in the field of culture, but also of interest to tourism experts, were presented by the representatives of the BSEC Member States, including "The Route of the Rose," "The Routes of Coinage," "Cultural Route of the Roman Emperors," "The Silk Road," "Myths of the Two Seas" and "Legend of Argonauts" projects. The participants expressed their interest in the said projects and their willingness to consider the possibility of taking part in them.

The UNDP-BSEC Liaison Officer delivered a presentation on a regional project proposal entitled "Alliances for Cultural Tourism in the Black Sea Region" and invited the Member States to participate in it. Topics related more specifically to tourism issues were also discussed.

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

The 4th Meeting of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on BSEC-EU Interaction was held in Athens on 2 October 2009. The Meeting was attended by the representatives of BSEC Member States, the Permanent International Secretariat and Related Bodies as well as the representatives of the Czech Republic, France, Poland and the European Commission in their capacity as Observers and the Republic of Hungary in its capacity as a Sectoral Dialogue Partner in BSEC.

The participants considered the developments since the last meeting of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on 30 January 2009 regarding BSEC-EU interaction. They also continued discussions on the non-binding paper "A Model for Black Sea Sectoral Partnerships" and agreed to forward it to the BSEC Committee of Senior Officials for its consideration to serve as a background paper for subsequent BSEC activities on the issue.

The participants exchanged views on the revised working document Black Sea Regional Strategy (2009-2013): Promoting a Region-wide Interaction between the BSEC and the EU. They agreed to continue the elaboration of the document.

BSEC-KAS WORKSHOP FOCUSES ON WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

A workshop on "Women and Entrepreneurship" was organized in Chisinau 30 September - 2 October 2009 jointly by the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat and the Representation of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung [Foundation] (KAS) for Turkey, in cooperation with the International Center for Advancement of Women into Business (ICAWB) in Moldova.

The aim of the workshop was to review the situation on women entrepreneurship and to listen to the experiences in the BSEC countries from the policy makers, NGOs and women entrepreneurs themselves. The participants also exchanged information on national difficulties facing women entrepreneurs in order to elaborate applicable recommendations for central and local governments, international organizations, NGOs and the business community.

The workshop produced a number of

conclusions and recommendations aimed at removing obstacles in doing business for women entrepreneurs, improving women entrepreneurs' access to finance, fostering cooperation and networking among women entrepreneurs, and improving knowledge about female entrepreneurship and its important role in the economy and society.

The next BSEC-KAS Workshop is scheduled to take place in Kiev to consider the consequences of the financial crisis on the activities of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

BSEC and KAS have been long working closely together to raise public awareness in the region of the importance of SMEs. Through a series of jointly organized workshops and seminars, it has been possible to address various issues related to the development of SMEs in the BSEC countries.

BSEC-UNDP COOPERATION ON BLACK SEA TRADE AND INVESTMENT PROMOTION CONTINUES

The Black Sea Brainstorming Workshop on Intra-Regional Investment Promotion and the Steering Committee Meeting of the Black Sea Trade and Investment Promotion Programme (BSTIP) took place in Bodrum, Turkey, on 2-3 July 2009, respectively.

The Brainstorming Workshop was organized by the UNDP in the context of launching the investment promotion component of the BSTIP. It was attended by the representatives of national investment promotion agencies from the BSEC Member States.

The main purpose of the workshop was to shape an action plan for supporting the intra-regional investment promotion component of the BSTIP project. Discussions were held on the possibilities of organizing one-day events devoted to investment promotion in BSEC Member States, organizing activities in support of capacity building of national investment promotion agencies (IPAs) and setting up a regional association of IPAs for the sustainability of the BSTIP. A general agreement was reached among the participants on Invest in Greece to host the secretariat of and to undertake the necessary preparatory work for setting up this association, in cooperation with BSEC Permanent International Secretariat.

The Meeting of the Steering Committee of the BSTIP, on the other hand, was attended by the representatives of BSEC, UNDP, Turkey and Greece and the BSEC Business Council. The Steering Committee reviewed the activities of the BSTIP Project and focused on approving the Workplan for BSTIP for July 2009-June 2010 and on preparing the second phase of the project which will begin in March 2011.

It was decided that the Workplan for BSTIP in 2010 will include partnership forums on tourism and construction materials; one-day investment promotion events in BSEC countries and activities in support of capacity building for the BSEC Member States in the field of investment promotion, as suggested in the Brainstorming Workshop; workshops on strengthening competitiveness in various BSEC Member States; and an event devoted to the impact of the economic crisis on regional co-operation.

Given the fact that the BSTIP project has had an impact and generated a momentum in developing greater awareness among companies and the private sector of the potential of intra-regional trade and investments, the BSTIP Steering Committee concluded that a Second Phase of the project would be justified.

As is known, BSTIP is the first partnership project between BSEC and UNDP. It is also the first programme jointly financed by Turkey and Greece under the auspices of the UNDP. The overall aim of the Programme is to support economic growth and development in the Black Sea sub-region through closer economic integration and to expand intra-regional trade and investment links among the BSEC Member States. The beneficiaries of the BSTIP are SMEs and special emphasis is given to enterprises managed by young and women entrepreneurs. The programme, launched in December 2006, is being implemented in cooperation with the local chambers of commerce and business support organizations in each of the BSEC countries.



BSEC-KAS Workshop on Women and Entrepreneurship in Chisinau.



Participants to the BSEC-KAS Workshop on Women and Entrepreneurship, held in Chisinau.

BSEC PROJECT DEVELOPMENT FUND (PDF)

PDF NEWS: REVISED PDF TECHNICAL DOCUMENTS APPROVED

The 21st Meeting of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, held on 22 October 2009 in Baku, approved the new technical documents for the submission of Project Development Fund applications, which had been undergoing modification following the adoption of the new PDF Manual of Operations at the 19th Meeting of the Council in Tirana in October 2008.

Within this framework, the revised PDF Standard Application for funding a BSEC project, the Grant Contract, the General Conditions applicable to BSEC grant contracts under the PDF and the Evaluation Sheet for a Project Application were approved. The Council of Ministers called upon interested parties to present their projects in compliance with the new

statutory documents, which can be downloaded from the PDF website www.bsecprojects.com. Since BSEC and PDF are eligible for Official Development Assistance (ODA) funds, donor countries, development agencies and other organizations were invited to consider making their contributions to the Fund or to provide co-funding to BSEC projects on an ad hoc basis. The full list of PDF projects is available on the PDF website.

In the meantime, the Republic of Armenia transferred a voluntary contribution of EUR 10,000 to the Fund and the PDF Steering Committee approved the final deliverables of the PDF project "Fatty Liver incidence on Mini Dairy Cow Farms in Serbia, Romania and Republic of Moldova".

BSEC HELLENIC DEVELOPMENT FUND BECOMES OPERATIONAL

BSEC Hellenic Development Fund has been fully launched as of 1 November 2009. The 21st Meeting of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in October 2009 in Baku appointed Mr. Konstantinos ZAIMIS (Hellenic Republic) as BSEC-HDF Manager as of 1st November 2009.

The HDF will enhance BSEC's capacity to finance regional projects, starting with ones related to the areas of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency. More information on HDF is available at www.bsecprojects.com.



BLACK SEA TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BANK (BSTDB)

BSTDB ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

On 14 June 2009, the Board of Governors of BSTDB held its 11th Annual Meeting in Thessaloniki, Greece under the Chairmanship of Konstantinos KOLLIAS, BSTDB Alternate Governor for the Hellenic Republic.

The Board approved the financial statements of the Bank for 2008, showing a 44% increase of net profit amounting to SDR 13.1 million (appx. USD 20 million). Outstanding operations increased by 30%, in comparison to 2007, to a total of SDR 617 million (USD 950 million) while the Bank succeeded in closing the year without any non-performing loans. Discussing the Bank's strategy for 2009-2010, the Board decided that the main objective would be on securing adequate funding, maintaining the portfolio quality and controlling the expenses. Responding to the demand of its member countries, the Bank intends to shift towards more public sector and public-private partnerships and cross-border activities.

The Board approved the application of the International Investment Bank based in Moscow for Observer Status with BSTDB, which became the sixth BSTDB Observer Institution. The Observer Status provides a flexible framework for developing regular working relations between BSTDB and Observer Institutions aimed at joint and coordinated activities in the Black Sea Region, including project co-financing and technical cooperation.

The Board elected Ibrahim CANAKCI, BSTDB Governor for Turkey, Undersecretary of Treasury of the Republic of Turkey, as Chairman of the Board of Governors for the period until the next Annual Meeting of the Board. Governors for Armenia and Bulgaria were elected Deputy Chairmen of the Board. The next BSTDB Annual Meeting will take place on 6 June 2010 in Istanbul.



10TH ANNIVERSARY OF BSTDB CELEBRATED WITH A REGIONAL ECONOMIC FORUM

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of its activities in the Black Sea Region, BSTDB organised a Regional Economic Forum titled "Black Sea Region: Today and Tomorrow" on 14 June 2009, in Thessaloniki, to discuss the current economic situation and short to mid-term prospects for the Black Sea Region. National economic and monetary policy makers from the BSTDB member states as well as leading development finance institutions contributed to the discussion. Ploutarchos SAKELLARIS, European Investment Bank Vice-President, delivered the key-note speech.

Discussions with national policy makers were summarized by the panel moderator Plamen TONCHEV, an international relations analyst, as follows:

- While the crisis has yet to be fully addressed and this may take up to two more years, anti-crisis measures have been taken in all the countries of the region and the beneficial effects of stabilization are already being felt.
- Despite the diversity of the region, there are a number of commonalities to be considered by governments in Black Sea countries.
- All the countries' strategies include a prominent component aiming at the stabilization of the banking system.
- Transparency and credibility of the banking system are crucial elements, as customers' confidence needs to be regained. A valuable lesson learnt is that more active and effective supervision of banks by state authorities is needed, so that "market failures" are prevented in due time.
- At the heart of all anti-crisis responses is the revitalization of the real economy, to the benefit of societies across the entire Black Sea region.
- Regional co-operation should be incorporated into the anti-crisis strategy of all the Black Sea governments, which underlines the need for closer coordination, and the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank is very much part of this effort.

Discussions with international finance institutions' (IFIs) representatives, summarized by the moderator Sophia Kassidova, BSTDB Vice President Finance, revealed that recent events have imposed new requirements on IFIs for seeking a balance between mandate and opportunities:

- balance between their development mandate and the opportunities for profit they have after private capital has retreated substantially from the region.
- balance between economic rationale and politically-motivated requests from member governments.
- balance between beneficiaries of IFI funds - large companies which, in the recent past, could get favorable market financing and which are likely, even now, to receive government help, or smaller companies, possibly SMEs, which are more vulnerable to economic shock.
- balance between adequate market pricing and the primary objective of the financing of IFIs - sustainable economic growth.

The Forum was also intended to gather all important partners that have contributed to the success of the Bank during the years to join BSTDB in celebrating 10th anniversary of its activities in the Black Sea Region.

BSTDB CONTRIBUTES TO ENVIRONMENTAL MODERNIZATION OF MAJOR ROMANIAN POWER PLANT

BSTDB provided a 13-year EUR 20 million secured corporate loan to finance the environmental rehabilitation and modernization programme of Turceni, the largest lignite fired power plant in Romania. The funding of the operation with a total cost of EUR 170 million was arranged by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and included participation from commercial banks.

The proceeds of the loan will be used by Turceni for the design, procurement and installation of equipment for environmental modernization.

The operation is expected to have significant environmental benefits for Romania. Also, it ensures the mobilization of funds from outside the Black Sea region, presents co-financing opportunities with international development and commercial banks and provides long-term financing during an uncertain period.



BSTDB President KAPLAN welcoming the guests of the Forum.



EIB Vice President SAKELLARIS addressing the audience as a keynote speaker.



The Forum gathered around 200 guests.

BSTDB FURTHER DEVELOPS ITS TRADE FINANCE PROGRAM IN TURKEY

BSTDB is providing Turk Eximbank with a 5-year revolving pre-export finance facility of up to USD 40 million. The facility will be used by Turk Eximbank for on-lending to Turkish exporting companies trading with BSTDB member countries and beyond.

This credit line is built on the successful 10-year cooperation between BSTDB and Turk Eximbank to support trade between Turkey and the Black Sea Region. BSTDB provided to Turk Eximbank in aggregate over USD 360 million under the revolving short-term Pre-Export Finance Facility.

BSTDB PARTICIPATES IN ENVIRONMENTAL LOAN TO PETROM (ROMANIA)

BSTDB provided a 7-year EUR 25 million loan to finance an environmental investment programme of Petrom S.A., a leading Romanian oil and gas company. Petrom's environmental investment program includes several projects for pollution clean-up, pipeline replacement and implementation of health and safety measures that lead to increased energy efficiency.

The funding of the investment program totaling EUR 475 million is arranged by EBRD and also includes loans from a group of commercial banks.

The BSTDB business relationship with Petrom S.A. goes back more than seven years. A BSTDB loan has previously been provided to the company in 2002 and helped achieve its privatization.

BSTDB COOPERATES WITH NORDIC INVESTMENT BANK IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

On 5 October 2009, BSTDB and the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) have finalized a loan agreement for the financing of projects of mutual interest in the Black Sea region. For this purpose, NIB will make available a EUR30 million loan to BSTDB for the term of 9 years.

The financing provided under the loan agreement will be allocated to mutually agreed projects in the BSTDB member countries, with priority given to projects promoting environmental improvements and sustainability. "I am happy to see that despite the distance between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea that separates us, we have managed to establish very close institutional relations and maintain contacts at all levels. The NIB Observer status with BSTDB created even more favourable framework for our cooperation" stated Hayrettin KAPLAN, BSTDB President at the signing of the agreement.

"NIB attaches great importance on its cooperation with other international financial institutions. Our loan to the BSTDB is a good example of this. Such contracts enable us to be active in areas where our capacity would otherwise be limited", said the Nordic Investment Bank's President and CEO, Johnny AKERHOLM.

BSTDB INCREASES FINANCING TO BULGARIAN SMES

On 9 October 2009, BSTDB and the Bulgarian Development Bank (BDB) signed an agreement for the provision of an SME loan facility for the amount of EUR 8 million. The loan facility will be made available by the BDB to Bulgarian SMEs for the purpose of financing projects with maturity up to 5 years and a grace period of up to 18 months for the creation, modernization, expansion and diversification of business facilities, as well as working capital financing for production or service related facilities and medium term incremental or start-up working capital requirements, in addition to export and pre-export financing of industrial or agricultural enterprises.

"We are confident that in this highly constrained credit environment where alternative options for SMEs are limited, our loan will bring economic benefits for the Bulgarian

economy, like new employment opportunities and increase in export capacity and competitiveness", said Hayrettin KAPLAN, BSTDB President signing the loan agreement. "The relations between both banks have an important potential that we intend to develop during the next year. We have also discussed the next step of our cooperation - BSTDB to extend its activity in Bulgaria with the assistance of BDB", said Sasho TCHAKALSKI after the signing of the loan agreement.

The BDB was established in 2008 by the Parliament of the Republic of Bulgaria. The financial institution is a successor of the Encouragement Bank. Its mission is to support the development of the Bulgarian economy by promoting export and supporting the implementation of the economic policy of the government with regards to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, either directly or through on-lending.



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION (PABSEC)

33rd PLENARY SESSION OF THE PABSEC GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADDRESSES THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FINANCIAL CRISIS IN THE REGION

The 33rd Plenary Session of the PABSEC General Assembly was held in Bucharest on 11-13 June 2009. Ms. Roberta Alma ANASTASE, PABSEC President, President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of Romania, delivered the opening speech.

The General Assembly was attended by the national delegations of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Greece, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine. The BSEC and its Related Bodies were represented by the Secretary General of the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat and the Director General of the International Centre for Black Sea Studies. Among observers and guests were representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, the Senate and the National Assembly of the French Republic, the Knesset of the State of Israel, the Assembly of the Western European Union (AWEU), the European Parliament (EP), Interparliamentary Assembly of the Eurasian Economic Community (IPA EurAsEC), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union of Belarus-Russia (PAUBR), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE PA), the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (IAO), the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC), the Council of the European Union, the Union of Road Transport Associations in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Region (BSEC-URTA), the Black Sea Universities Network (BSUN), the Marmara Group Strategic and Social Research Foundation and the International Federation for Sustainable Development and Fight Against Poverty in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (FISPMED).

The topic of the general debate was "Strategies and policies aiming to diminish the consequences of the economic and financial crisis in the BSEC Member States". The participants stressed that in the long term, the main challenge is to update the principles that are guiding the reform of the international financial system, including those concerning transparency, improvement of the regulations of the financial systems, ensuring the integrity of the financial markets and enhancing cooperation among the international financial institutions. It was stated that although it is a sensitive moment for all the Black Sea Region countries, the crisis represents also the opening of new opportunities, and the national parliaments have an essential role in discussing the necessary solutions and their political formulation.

The PABSEC members conducted debates on the Reports and Recommendations drafted by the PABSEC specialized Committees during their spring meetings on "Development of sea transport in the Black Sea Region: problems and prospects," "Migration in the BSEC Member States - legal aspects," "Migration in the BSEC Member States - social and cultural aspects" and "The need to protect children from commercial exploitation in the BSEC Member States." The Assembly adopted Recommendations on these subjects addressed to the Parliaments and Governments of the Member Countries and to BSEC.

The Assembly also discussed the activities carried out by the BSEC.

The Assembly elected Mr. Marius ROGIN, Head of the Romanian national delegation, Mr. Sergey SHISHKAREV, Head of the Russian national delegation, Mr. Mehmet CICEK, Member of the Turkish national delegation, and Mr. Mikola YANKOVSKY, Head of the Ukrainian national delegation, as Vice-Presidents of the Assembly, and Mr. Elias KALLIORAS, Head of the Hellenic national delegation as Vice-President of the Assembly on Financial Matters.

Following the end of the 33rd Plenary Session, on 13 June 2009, Mr. Boris GRYZLOV, Chairman of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, assumed the six-month term Presidency of PABSEC.



Family photo at the 33rd Plenary Session of PABSEC General Assembly in Bucharest.

PABSEC COMMITTEES ADDRESS ASPECTS OF ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS AND MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

During autumn 2009, the three PABSEC Committees debated and drafted recommendations on topics of major importance for the countries of the region.

The 33rd Meeting of the Economic, Commercial, Technological and Environmental Affairs Committee was held in Thessaloniki on 21 October 2009. Mr. Areg GHUKASYAN, Member of the Committee (Armenia), presented a Draft Report on "Water resources management in the Black Sea region," while the Draft Recommendation on the same subject was presented by Mr. Gagik MINASYAN, Chairman of the Committee (Armenia).

The 34th Meeting of the Legal and Political Affairs Committee on the other hand took place in Kyiv on 13-14 October 2009. The main item on the agenda was "Rational Management of Natural Resources in the Black Sea Region: Enhancement of Legislative Framework" and the Rapporteur was Mr. Serhey PODHORNYY, Vice-Chairman of the Committee (Ukraine). Mr. Michael YEMELIANOV, Chairman of the Committee (Russia), presented the Draft Recommendation on this subject.

The Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee also convened in autumn. Its 33rd Meeting was organized in Thessaloniki on 22 October 2009. The members of the Committee discussed the Draft Report and the Draft Recommendation on "Shaping ecological awareness and behavior in the BSEC Member States," presented by Mr. Alexandru MAZARE, Member of the Committee (Romania) and by Mr. Alexandros DERMENTZOPOULOS, Chairman of the Committee (Greece), respectively.

34th PLENARY SESSION OF THE PABSEC GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN MOSCOW TO ADDRESS ENERGY SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT CORRIDORS

PABSEC will hold the Thirty-Fourth Plenary Session of its General Assembly on 23-25 November 2009 in Moscow. The General Debate will provide an opportunity for the speakers and heads of national delegations to address the issues of development of international transport corridors and ensuring energy security of the BSEC countries and Europe.

The members of the Assembly will debate the Reports and Recommendations drafted by the PABSEC specialized Committees during their autumn meetings, and then adopt the Recommendations on these subjects addressed to the Parliaments and Governments of the Member Countries and to BSEC.

Furthermore, the General Assembly will deliberate the results of the 21st Meeting of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Baku on 22 October 2009, as well as of the ministerial meetings held during the Azerbaijani Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC. PABSEC members will also deliberate the Progress Report of the Parliamentary Assembly.

Within the framework of the 34th Plenary Session of the PABSEC General Assembly, the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation will organize a trip to the Russian gas fields in Novy Urengoy on 25 November 2009.



BSEC BUSINESS COUNCIL (BSEC BC)

NEW SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE BSEC BUSINESS COUNCIL ASSUMES HER DUTIES



Ms. Eftychia BACOPOULOU (Greece) assumed her duties as the new Secretary General of the BSEC Business Council (BSEC BC) on 1 July 2009, replacing her predecessor Dr. Costas MASMANNIDIS (Greece) who had served the Business Council since 2000 for three consecutive terms. Ms. BACOPOULOU was elected unanimously at the 36th Meeting of the BSEC BC Board of Directors in October 2008, in Tirana. She is the fourth Secretary General of the BSEC BC and the first woman to hold this position since the organization was established.

BACOPOULOU said she was honored by her election and was aware of her responsibilities. Outlining her views, she praised the work conducted thus far by her predecessors for over 15 years and noted that her vision is "an economically integrated and developed BSEC region." She is also looking forward to fruitfully working together with the other bodies of the BSEC Organization in order to enhance cooperation and promote economic development in the Black Sea Region.

The new Secretary General also stressed the need for the BSEC BC to orient itself towards closer cooperation with all the business communities representing the 12 BSEC Member States for coordinating the actions to promote the individual and collective initiatives of the enterprises and companies directly involved in the process of economic cooperation. "In this respect, partnerships with the European Union and other international organizations will be actively sought" said BACOPOULOU.

Ms. BACOPOULOU, prior to joining the BSEC BC, held various diplomatic positions, including at the Permanent Representation of Greece to the EU in Brussels, the Greek Embassies in Sofia and Moscow and the Directorate for Economic Relations with SE Europe, CIS countries & BSEC at the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

She studied Law at the University of Athens, followed by her postgraduate studies in European Law and International Business Law in Paris and Athens.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE BSEC BUSINESS COUNCIL MEET IN BAKU

The 38th Meeting of the Board of Directors (BoD) of the BSEC Business Council was held on 19 October 2009 in Baku.

The meeting, hosted by the National Confederation of Entrepreneurs of Azerbaijan, was important within the framework of the efforts towards achieving progress in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the BSEC Business Council in promoting regional business cooperation.

During the meeting, Mr. Volkan YUZER (Turkey) was elected as the Deputy Secretary General of the BSEC Business Council as of 1 November 2009 for a three-year term.



Participants to the 38th Meeting of the Board of Directors of the BSEC Business Council, held on 19 October 2009 in Baku.

ENHANCING REGIONAL BUSINESS COOPERATION ACROSS THE WIDER BLACK SEA AREA

An event titled "Enhancing regional business cooperation across the wider Black Sea area: a platform for Regional Business Dialogue" was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan in cooperation with the BSEC Business Council on 20 October 2009, in Baku.

Members of the BSEC Committee of Senior Officials, representatives of the Members of the BSEC Business Council Board of Directors, Embassies and International Organizations as well as business associations participated in the event.

The event provided an opportunity for exchange of views on regional business cooperation in

the wider Black Sea area. It also provided food for thought for the ongoing discussions with regard to the role of regional business schemes in the development of the private sector and economic relations across the countries of the region.

Discussions were devoted to the promotion of the intra-BSEC business dialogue, exploring opportunities and channels for advancing the business voice; the experiences and practices shared by the business community in regional business; and the interests and expectations of the business community in devising a new approach towards regional economic cooperation.

OLIVE TREE AND OLIVE OIL: SYMBOLS OF PROSPERITY AND CULTURE IN THE WIDER BLACK SEA AREA

The international conference on "Olive tree and olive oil: Symbols of prosperity and culture in the wider Black Sea area" took place on 7 October 2009, in Baku. The event was co-organised by the BSEC Business Council and the National Confederation of Entrepreneurs of Azerbaijan, with the official support of the Ministries of Culture and Tourism, Agriculture, Foreign Affairs and Economic Development of Azerbaijan, under the auspices of the Greek and Turkish Embassies in Baku. It was held in honour of the celebration of "Baku Islamic Cultural Capital 2009".

The conference was a big success, hosting more than 100 guests, comprised of both olive oil producers and traders, as well as those launching initiatives around the olive oil culture in the region. It provided a unique occasion for businessmen coming from the BSEC olive oil producer countries - namely, Albania, Azerbaijan, Greece and Turkey - to meet and cooperate. The event provided a unique opportunity for business people and government officials to explore the potentials of this dynamic region and offered extensive networking opportunities. The participants expressed their wish that similar conferences be organized on an annual basis in the BSEC region.



BSEC Business Council Secretary General Ms. Eftychia BACOPOULOU addressing the international conference on "Olive tree and olive oil: Symbols of prosperity and culture in the wider Black Sea area" held in Baku on 7 October 2009.

BUSINESS COUNCIL WEBSITE RE-LAUNCHED: BLACK SEA BUSINESS INFORMATION GATEWAY

The Business Council re-launched its website www.bsec-business.org as the Black Sea Business Information Gateway.

The Black Sea Business Information Gateway is a valuable tool for businesspeople across the world interested in investing and developing their businesses in the 12 BSEC Member States. It brings together useful links of the most important regional and international business-related websites.

The Business Council has already been operating this portal very successfully for several years. However, the new Gateway offers its users with more up-to-date information, a more user-friendly layout, easier accessibility and navigation.

New sections have been included, such as "Trade Barriers" and "Business Guides." "It allows easy access to business information for those who want to invest in the region, including information on business conditions, macroeconomic data and foreign trade statistics, links to Business and Investment Guides and for tenders, calendar of fairs and exhibitions in the countries of the region" highlighted Ms. BACOPOULOU. Trade Barriers section is a special section devoted to the joint project by the Business Council and the Undersecretariat of Foreign Trade of the Republic of Turkey, titled "Towards A Black Sea Regional Market: Tackling Barriers-To-Trade." The section contains data on EU Market Access Data, as well as a trade barrier reporting system open to anybody with a problem to report. There is also a Newsletter subscription option which is activated with a one-step e-mail address registration. The subscription allows receiving updated information from the Business Council.



INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR BLACK SEA STUDIES (ICBSS)

2nd INTERNATIONAL BLACK SEA SYMPOSIUM SUCCESSFULLY CONCLUDED



The 2nd International Black Sea Symposium (IBSS) on "The Black Sea Region: the State of Play and the Way Forward" was held on the island of Kalymnos, Dodecanese/Greece, on 30 June - 5 July 2009.

42 young professionals from 22 countries, including 11 BSEC Member States, Iran and the USA attended an intensive programme of sessions on topics such as energy security, EU-Russia relations and protracted conflicts. Sessions led by 25 renowned experts alternated with workshops in which facilitator Prof. Benjamin J. BROOME of the Arizona State University trained participants in conflict resolution techniques.

As is known, the ICBSS launched the IBSS project in 2008 in order to contribute to understanding and cooperation in the Black Sea region and beyond. The project is implemented in cooperation with numerous partners and sponsors.



Group photo of participants of the 2nd International Black Sea Symposium, held on the island of Kalymnos.



COMMISSION ON THE BLACK SEA WORK PROGRESSES

The Commission on the Black Sea held a roundtable meeting in Istanbul on 8-9 June 2009. Researchers and practitioners discussed the food-for-thought papers presented by the project core group on the topics of democracy, socio-economic welfare, regional cooperation and security.

The second roundtable meeting was held in Moscow at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MGIMO). The meeting took place on 24 September 2009. Participants discussed opportunities for international cooperation, threats to the region's stability and exit strategies under difficult circumstances. Special

attention was devoted to the resolution of regional problems, security initiatives for the Black Sea region and human rights and democracy issues.

As is known, the Commission on the Black Sea aims to contribute to a joint vision and common strategy for the Black Sea region through a comprehensive study on the future of the region and related policy recommendations. It is a joint project of the ICBSS, the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation - a project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States (Romania), Bertelsmann Stiftung (Germany) and TEPAV- the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey. For more information, readers may visit www.blackseacom.eu.

S&T STAKEHOLDER CONFERENCE IN ATHENS



In the framework of the project "S&T International Cooperation Network for Eastern European and Central Asian countries (IncoNet EECA)," the ICBSS hosted a Stakeholders Conference in Athens on 16-17 June 2009. Over 60 experts from 29 countries discussed "EU-EECA S&T cooperation: the way forward", concluding that it is vital that countries have national Science Technological Development and Innovation Policies in place.

IncoNet EECA is funded under the EU's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). Readers may find out more on the topic at www.inco-eece.net.

BRAINSTORMING MEETING ON BSEC-EU INTERACTION HELD

A closed brainstorming meeting on the state of play in BSEC-EU interaction was organized by the ICBSS on 1 October 2009, in Athens. A background paper "BSEC-EU Interaction: Reflecting on the Past, Mapping out the Future" drafted by the ICBSS was submitted to the discussion of the representatives from the BSEC Member States, BSEC Related Bodies, EU Member States that are BSEC Observers

and Sectoral Dialogue Partners and the European Commission.

The participants of the meeting appreciated the event as a useful and necessary step in promoting dialogue and a better understanding of the positions of BSEC and the EU on the specific issues of BSEC-EU Interaction.



E-DEBATE ON THE FUTURE OF THE BSEC

A decade after the BSEC Charter was signed, the ICBSS launched an online debate on the future of the Organisation. Everyone is invited to join the discussion at <http://icbss.blogspot.com/>.

Selected Publications

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

- Markedonov, Sergey. The Big Caucasus: Consequences of the "Five Day War", Threats and Political Prospects. Xenophon Paper, no. 7. Athens: ICBSS, May 2009.
- Fotiou, Eleni. 'Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform': What is at Stake for Regional Cooperation? ICBSS Policy Brief, no. 16. Athens: ICBSS, June 2009.
- Roberts, John. The Role of Azerbaijan in European Gas Supply and the Greek Interest. ICBSS Policy Brief, no. 15. Athens: ICBSS, May 2009.

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