



ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION
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**PRESS RELEASE ON THE VISIT OF
HER EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR MS. SLADJANA PRICA,
ASSISTANT MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA,
REPRESENTING THE CHAIRMAN-IN-OFFICE OF
THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION**

Her Excellency Ambassador Ms. Sladjana PRICA, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, Representing the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), visited the BSEC Headquarters in Istanbul, on 19 January 2012.

At the BSEC Headquarters, Assistant Minister PRICA presented the priorities of the Serbian Chairmanship to the representatives of the BSEC Member States, Related Bodies, Observers, Sectoral Dialogue Partners and special guests. These priorities will constitute the roadmap for BSEC for the next six months.

The Chairmanship will pursue the further de-politicization of the work of the Organization and strive to strengthen the role, the economic dimension and the project-oriented approach of BSEC. Within this framework, the Chairmanship will work for the implementation of the two flagship transport infrastructure projects of BSEC, namely, the Black Sea Ring Highway and the Development of the Motorways of the Sea in the BSEC region. The Memoranda of Understanding for both of these projects were signed during the previous Chairmanship-in-Office of the Republic of Serbia, back in 2007. The Serbian Chairmanship will also support the continuation of the pilot project on the issuing of the BSEC Transit Permit documents for trucks and the regular use these Permits.

Strengthening the Organization's internal structures, which is seen as a prerequisite to strengthen the role of BSEC within the international system, will constitute another area of focus.

With the 20th Anniversary of BSEC approaching, projecting achievable objectives and reflecting the clear positioning of the Organization in the international framework is seen as imperative for the success of the BSEC. In this direction, updating and finalizing the BSEC Economic Agenda for the Future, which was adopted back in 2001, is perceived as a priority by the Chairmanship.

During the Serbian Chairmanship-in-Office, cooperation in the field of energy, with particular emphasis on energy security, will be fostered.

As prerequisites for sustainable economic development, special emphasis will be placed on environmental protection, the alleviation of the negative consequences of climate change, the use of renewable energy sources and the reduction of carbon emissions.

The enhancement of relations between BSEC and its Related Bodies as well as with other regional and international organizations, including the specialized agencies of the United Nations, the OSCE and the EU will be promoted. In this context, the Chairmanship-in-Office will support a broader participation of the EU in concrete BSEC projects, particularly in the fields of infrastructure development, transport, environmental

protection and combating organized crime. It will also work on the formalization of the EU Strategy for the Black Sea and explore project possibilities under the already launched partnerships within the context of the Black Sea Synergy.

As is known, the Republic of Serbia has assumed the Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC as of 1 January 2012, for a term of six months ending on 30 June 2012. During this period, the Serbian Chairmanship envisages to implement a comprehensive calendar of events which is expected to enhance BSEC cooperation in a number of areas. Among the high level events, in addition to the Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Belgrade in June 2012, sectoral ministerial meetings are envisaged in the areas of energy and environmental protection. A Summit which will mark the 20th Anniversary of BSEC will also be organized during the term of the Serbian Chairmanship.

Background Information:

BSEC was launched as a regionally owned initiative, with Turkey's lead, on 25 June 1992 at the Istanbul Summit, at a time when regional cooperation was most needed in the transformation process that the countries of the region were undergoing. The idea that stronger economic cooperation among the Black Sea countries would enhance peace and stability in the region was the underlying philosophy behind BSEC.

With the entry into force of its Charter in 1999, BSEC was officially transformed from an initiative into a regional cooperation organization.

Today, BSEC serves as a forum for cooperation in a wide range of areas and a platform for political dialogue for its 12 Member States.¹ The BSEC countries encompass an area of approximately 20 million square kilometers with 340 million people. Transport, environmental protection, trade and economic development, energy, migration management, combating organized crime, communications and information technology, science and technology, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, institutional renewal and good governance, education, culture, tourism and customs matters are among the most active fields of cooperation within the framework of the Organization.

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H.E. Ambassador Ms. Sladjana PRICA, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, presented the priorities of the Serbian Chairmanship-in-Office at the BSEC Headquarters in Istanbul, on 19 January 2012.

¹ The 12 BSEC Member States are Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine.