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PRESS RELEASE
ON
THE VISIT OF HIS EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR MR. MIKHAIL VANIN,
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
REPRESENTING THE CHAIRMAN-IN-OFFICE OF
THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

His Excellency Ambassador Mr. Mikhail VANIN, Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, representing the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), visited the BSEC Headquarters in Istanbul on 6 July 2011.

At the BSEC Headquarters, Director General VANIN presented the priorities of the Russian 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.

In this framework, the BSEC Economic Agenda for the Future which was adopted back in 2001, will be revised and updated, so that it meets the requirements of the current state of affairs in the BSEC region. This document will constitute a solid basis for the discussions during the 20th Anniversary Summit of BSEC in 2012.

The Russian Chairmanship will focus on enhancing the economic efficiency of BSEC activities through more intensive implementation of the existing projects. In this context, progress will be strived in the implementation of the two flagship infrastructure projects of BSEC, namely, the Black Sea Ring Highway and the Development of the Motorways of the Sea at the BSEC region. The development of an integrated energy market in the region will also be further pursued.

Environmental protection, strengthening cooperation between law enforcement agencies, improving collaboration capacities in emergency situations, further enhancing cooperation in the areas of transport, agriculture, quality control and safety of medical products, sanitary protection of

the territories of the BSEC Member States, information and communication technologies and social exchange through tourism projects constitute other priorities for the Chairmanship.

The capacities of the BSEC Related Bodies will be used more extensively. The enhancement of relations between BSEC and other regional and international organizations, including the specialized agencies of the United Nations, will be promoted. More involvement of the Observers in the BSEC process will be sought. Building partnerships between BSEC and the EU on the basis of equality and mutual benefit in the implementation of projects of importance to the Black Sea region constitutes another objective.

As is known, the Russian Federation has assumed the Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC as of 1 July 2011, for a term of six months ending on 31 December 2011. During this period, the Russian 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 Moscow in December 2011, the Chairmanship-in-Office plans to organize an informal meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly general debate in New York, in September. A record number of sectoral ministerial meetings are envisaged, which include meetings of the Ministers of Energy, Transport, Emergency Assistance and Agriculture.

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. The BSEC countries which differ from each other in terms of their level of development, size and population encompass an area of approximately 20 million square kilometers with 330 million people. Transport, energy, trade, economic development, communications, education, culture, tourism, science and technology, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, institutional renewal and good governance, customs services and fight against organized crime are among the most active fields of cooperation within the framework of the Organization.