

ANKARA DECLARATION
OF THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE MEMBER STATES
OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION
(Ankara, 25 October 2007)

We, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) – the Republic of Albania, the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Bulgaria, Georgia, the Hellenic Republic, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Serbia, the Republic of Turkey and Ukraine – met in Ankara, on 25 October 2007, at the conclusion of the Turkish Chairmanship-in-Office of the BSEC.

Taking guidance from the political assessments and executive dispositions of the Declaration adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the BSEC Member States on the occasion of the BSEC Fifteenth Anniversary Summit held in Istanbul, on 25 June 2007,

Being fully aware of the increased responsibility incumbent upon the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs for implementing the policy guidelines set at the highest political level and developing new initiatives aimed at enhancing the effective performance of the Organization of the BSEC in accordance with its Charter and other basic documents,

We:

1. *Renew* our commitment to undertake further steps toward consolidating the BSEC's character as a project-based, result-oriented organization and, to that end, to implement the agreed measures and projects and initiate new ones with a view to strengthening the operational capacity of all BSEC institutions in a continuing reform process.

2. *Instruct* the Committee of Senior Officials, with the assistance of the Country Coordinators of the Working Groups, the BSEC Related Bodies and BSEC PERMIS, to explore areas where it is desirable and realistic to develop new legally binding instruments for multilateral cooperation in a regional format, especially in the areas of cooperation of particular prominence - namely, energy, trade and transport – which were addressed in the Declaration of the BSEC Fifteenth Anniversary Summit, and to present concrete proposals for consideration and decision at the next Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

3. *Commend* the intensified cooperation among the BSEC Member States, which made it possible, during the Turkish Chairmanship-in-Office from 1 May 2007 to 31 October 2007, through effective interaction with the BSEC PERMIS, to hold the Fifteenth Anniversary Summit of the BSEC and other important events.

4. **Appreciate** the significance of the Meetings of the Ministers of the BSEC Member States in charge of Culture, Transport, Science and Technology, as well as of the Meeting of the Undersecretaries of the Ministers of Education during the Turkish Chairmanship-in-Office, and note with satisfaction that the deliberations and results of such meetings, including the agreed Action Plans, have become more practical, with clear responsibilities and deadlines for execution and follow-up action.

5. **Note** the need to identify and eliminate trade barriers and business/investment disincentives, which are obstacles to creating a more favorable business environment in the BSEC region, inter alia through their activities in the framework of other international organizations and at the bilateral level.

6. **Request** the Committee of Senior Officials, with the assistance of the Country Coordinator of the Working Group on Trade and Economic Development, keeping in mind the rules and practices of the WTO, to explore possibilities for feasible and practical approach to further facilitate trade, eventually through concluding legal instruments that would lead to the gradual harmonization of trade legislation and customs procedures in the BSEC Region.

7. **Stress** the significance of developing inter-modal transport systems in the BSEC Region and beyond, which will provide a solid foundation for the Member States to compete in the global economy through effective, reliable and efficient transport solutions.

8. **Highlight** the importance of developing stronger maritime transport links among the ports of the BSEC Region, with a view to contributing to the development of transport infrastructure and to creating favorable conditions for the business cooperation. In this regard, we call on the States Signatories of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Development of the Motorways of the Sea in the BSEC Region to speed up the relevant internal procedures necessary for its entering into force and implementation.

9. Moreover, we **call** on the States Signatories of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Coordinated Development of the Black Sea Ring Highway to speed up the relevant internal procedures necessary for its entering into force and implementation. At the same time, we welcome the work being done so far by the relevant experts for the implementation of the said Memorandum of Understanding, thus contributing to the achievement of the BSEC goals.

10. **Ask** the Committee of Senior Officials to further discuss and short list, with the assistance of the Working Group on Energy and the relevant Country Coordinator, specific areas where cooperation in the area of energy can be deepened.

11. **Call upon** the Committee of Senior Officials to discuss and consider the preparation of a paper on the possible means of strengthening the cooperation with international organizations dealing with issues on the protection and rehabilitation of the Black Sea marine environment,

including those on preventing and reducing the pollution of the rivers flowing into the sea and the hydrographical basins of the rivers flowing into the sea.

12. Recognizing the challenges posed by global warming and taking into account the concerted efforts of the international community to combat climate change, including under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process, **request** the competent BSEC bodies to address the issue at the regional level, and to this end, consider appropriate steps and develop cooperation with relevant international organizations.

13. **Highlight** the relevance of the UN Millennium Development Goals for the BSEC Member States and request the Committee of Senior Officials in cooperation with the UNDP, with the assistance of the BSEC PERMIS, to assess the progress made by the BSEC Member States to implement these internationally agreed goals, together with recommendations for specific actions at the regional level, for submission to the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

14. **Reaffirm** that the existing protracted conflicts in the region impede cooperation and emphasize the need for their earliest peaceful settlement on the basis of the norms and principles of international law.

15. **Welcome** the positive developments in the relations between the BSEC and the European Union following the BSEC official document titled "*BSEC-EU Interaction: The BSEC Approach*" of January 2007, the European Commission Communication titled "*Black Sea Synergy – A New Regional Cooperation Initiative*" of April 2007 and the acquisition by the Commission of the European Communities of Observer Status in BSEC at the BSEC Fifteenth Anniversary Summit in Istanbul, in June 2007, and to that effect decide to:

- (a) Call on the Republic of Bulgaria, the Hellenic Republic and Romania, as EU Member States to follow up the issue together in a concerted manner with the EU institutions, so as to achieve the objectives of BSEC-EU interaction; in this process, the continued efforts of the Republic of Turkey as a negotiating Country will be highly appreciated;
- (b) Charge the BSEC Ad Hoc Group of Experts on BSEC-EU Interaction, coordinated by the ICBS, to draft an outline of future steps (strategy paper) and working documents after the envisaged high-level BSEC-EU event for the launching of the synergy process.

16. **Welcome** the intention of Ukraine to host the afore mentioned high-level event in early 2008 during its BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office.

We, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States, express our gratitude to the Government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the people of the Republic of Turkey for the warm hospitality extended to the participants and the excellent organization of the BSEC Council Meeting in Ankara.
