



BS/CM/WG/R(00)1

**REPORT
OF THE
MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP
ON COMMUNICATIONS**

Chisinau, 29 February – 1 March 2000

1. The Meeting of the Working Group on Communications of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) was held in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova on 29 February – 1 March 2000.

2. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Ion Coşuleanu, Director of Department for Foreign Relations at the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Moldova.

3. The Meeting was attended by the representatives of the following Member States of the BSEC:

Republic of Armenia
Republic of Bulgaria
Hellenic Republic
Republic of Moldova
Romania
Russian Federation
Republic of Turkey
Ukraine

4. The representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of the BSEC, BSEC Business Council and the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB) attended the Meeting as BSEC Related Bodies.

The list of participants of the Meeting is attached as Annex I.

5. H.E. Mr. Afanasie SMOCHIN, Minister of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Moldova made an opening statement, the text of which is attached as Annex II.

6. The representative of the Chairman-in-Office of the BSEC, Mr. Andrei TOMA, also addressed the participants. The text of the statement is attached as Annex III.

7. The draft agenda of the Meeting was discussed and adopted with amendments. The agenda, as adopted is attached as Annex IV.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS IN THE BSEC MEMBER STATES

8. Under this agenda item, the delegations exchanged views on the development of communications in the Member States of the BSEC and presented their reports regarding present situation and perspectives for cooperation in the field of communications.

9. They also presented information regarding the structural changes in the field of communications in the countries and in particular with regard to their liberalization and legal framework required for these changes.

10. The participants discussed the issue related to the introduction of new telecommunication services in the BSEC Member States in connection with developing regional links as well as with the projects and programs of multilateral character which are being realized in the BSEC region.

11. They confirmed the interest of their countries in exchanging information on the development of national telecommunications networks within the BSEC region on a regular basis.

12. The representative of the PABSEC International Secretariat expressed the view that the Parliamentary dimension of the BSEC is willing to support the cooperation of the Member States, including in the sector of communications. It was mentioned that the Parliamentary Assembly of the BSEC will continue to render its legislative support for all the projects and programs initiated in the framework of the BSEC, including in the field of communications.

STATE OF AFFAIRS AND FURTHER PROSPECTS OF THE REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS PROJECTS

13. A thorough exchange of views took place on the current situation and prospects for development and implementation of concrete projects in the BSEC region (KAFOS, BSFOCS, TAE, TBL, ITUR, optic cable Russia-Georgia, etc.)

14. Some delegations expressed their concern about the delay in implementing some of the regional projects and emphasized the necessity of speeding up their realization.

15. The representatives of the Member States agreed to make all possible efforts so that the international traffic originating from other Member States to be routed via their territories to international gateways and existing fiber-optic cables.

PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

16. The participants considered and adopted the Plan of Action for the development of Communications in the Black Sea region elaborated by Moldova as the country-coordinator of the BSEC Working Group on Communications. The text of the Plan of Action as approved is attached as Annex V.

17. The delegations stated that the Plan of Action determines the main directions of development of communications in the BSEC region in order to create a highly efficient regional communications system.

18. The participants agreed that the Plan shall be considered as a general framework for cooperation of the BSEC Member States in the field of communications.

PRIVATIZATION AND INVESTMENT PLANS IN THE SECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS IN THE BSEC MEMBER STATES

19. Under this agenda item, the delegates exchanged views on privatization process in telecommunications in their own countries. They presented information regarding the legal aspects of this process.

20. While appreciating the results of the first stage of privatization of state-owned companies in some Member States, they stressed the importance of involvement of the private sector from the area and outside it in the privatization process.

21. The delegates presented the information regarding the investment opportunities in the field of telecommunications in the Member States and called upon both national and international companies to use these opportunities.

22. The representative of the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank made a presentation regarding the role and means of BSTDB in financing projects and programs in the BSEC Member States.

23. It was mentioned that the Bank will focus its activities on a small-scale projects in the BSEC area in those fields of activities that are of an interest for two or more Member States.

COOPERATION OF THE MEMBER STATES IN UTILIZING THE SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS AS WELL AS INTERNET NETWORK

24. Under this agenda item the participants exchanged views on the current stage and prospects of collaboration in utilizing the satellite communications facilities in the BSEC region.

25. The delegates agreed that additional information concerning this issue will be transmitted to the interested countries upon request.

26. The participants considered the issue related to the use of INTERNET Network and the services provided thereof. In this regard they agreed that INTERNET providers should be supported and assisted by the Government authorities of the BSEC Member States.

NEW PROJECTS AND AREAS OF COOPERATION

27. Some delegations informed the Meeting regarding new projects that are being implemented in their countries.

28. The representative of the Hellenic Republic informed the Meeting regarding a series of projects to be implemented in the Black Sea area:

- Exploitation of the new broadband network in the Black Sea area. Training and services.
- Telephone Directories: A market opportunity.
- Internet connectivity.

29. The delegations agreed that implementation of these projects would provide high quality communications services in the region.

30. The representative of Romania stated that continuous development of fiber-optic network with the particular attention to the border-crossing areas is a prerequisite for the telecom operators to be involved in providing new and “value added” services like Internet, E-commerce, high speed data transmission, etc.

31. In this regard three projects, which have been initiated by CABTO Group were mentioned:

- A common Balkan pay-phone card,
- Internet exchange,
- Frame relay over ATM network.

32. It was stated that these regional projects were already selected for the Balkan region, Bulgaria, Greece and Romania being their most active participants. Since the projects are open for participation, the other BSEC Member States were kindly invited to join them.

EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON Y2K ISSUE

33. The participants discussed the issue related to the problem of Year 2000 with regard to the information systems in the Black Sea countries. They pointed out that no risks or other difficulties have been encountered in the region in particular and in the world in general. However, they mentioned that the national authorities of the countries offered their assistance in preventing these problems.

EXPRESSION OF THANKS

34. The delegations expressed their gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Moldova and to the Ministry of Transport and Communications for the warm hospitality extended to them and for the good arrangements made for the Meeting.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

35. No issue was raised by the delegations under this agenda item.

DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

36. The participants agreed that the date and venue of the next Meeting of the Working Group on Communications would be communicated to the Member States through the Permanent International Secretariat.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

37. The delegates adopted the present report for submission to the Second Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs to be held in Chisinau on 27 April 2000.
