

**JOINT DECLARATION
OF THE MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF ECONOMY
OF THE BSEC MEMBER STATES**

“Increasing intra-trade in the BSEC Region via trade facilitation”

Istanbul, 11 May 2017

The Ministers in charge of Economy and Heads of Delegations 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 Istanbul, the Republic of Turkey, on 11 May 2017,

GUIDED by the BSEC Charter, the Istanbul Summit Declaration on the Black Sea Economic Cooperation signed on 25 July 1992, the principles and priorities agreed upon in the BSEC Economic Agenda: Towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership (Belgrade, 11 June 2012), as well as the Istanbul Summit Declaration on the Occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (Istanbul, 26 June 2012),

RECALLING the Joint Declarations by the Ministers in charge of Economy of the BSEC Member States (Bucharest, 17 May 2011; Yalta, 23 May 2013; Chisinau, 29 May 2015) and the importance of these policy documents for strengthening cooperation among the BSEC Member States,

APPRECIATING the role of the Belgrade Joint Declaration on Prospects of Cooperation in the field of Transport in the BSEC Region - BSEC Region, Integrate to Grow, Partnership for the Future (Belgrade, 1 November 2016), Sochi Joint Declaration on Prospects of Cooperation in the Field of Transport in the BSEC Region (Sochi, 1 June 2016) and the Baku Declaration of the Meeting of the Heads of Customs Administrations of the BSEC Member States (Baku, 26 November 2014) in promoting activities aimed at trade facilitation in the BSEC Region,

WELCOMING the entry into force of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement as of 22 February 2017, for launching a new phase for trade facilitation reforms and creating a significant boost for the multilateral trading system as a whole, taking into consideration the previous bilateral relations of some BSEC Member States, arising from their participation in the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union,

EMPHASIZING the importance of undertaking efforts aimed at trade facilitation for increasing intra-regional trade of the BSEC Member States,

WELCOMING the significant progress achieved towards the adoption of the draft Regional Trade Facilitation Strategy for the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Region and the draft Framework for BSEC Single Window Cooperation,

RECALLING that the BSEC through its Turkish Chairmanship-in-Office has defined its priorities under the Heading of “Strengthening Partnership for Sustainable Development”,

APPRECIATING the BSEC activities in the past 25 years in supporting the efforts of the Member States in their path towards sustainable development,

WELCOMING the steps aimed at strengthening the project-oriented dimension of BSEC, as well as recognizing the need to further develop BSEC project capacity through Project Development Fund, Project Management Unit and Black Sea Project Promotion Facility,

Declared their willingness to:

Give priority consideration to trade facilitation among the BSEC Member States and consider the possibility of policy coordination to this effect through BSEC;

Support the efforts initiated and continued at the previous Ministerial Meetings aimed at the implementation of the provisions of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation in the BSEC Region, as appropriate;

Pursue the work for adopting and implementing of the Regional Trade Facilitation Strategy for the BSEC Region to strengthen the efforts of the BSEC Member States on trade facilitation within appropriate multilateral and bilateral agreements;

Encourage the BSEC bodies and the BSEC PERMIS to actively consider new development solutions and contributions BSEC can make, through regional cooperation, to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by the United Nations Summit in September 2015;

Continue joint examination and elaboration of practical mechanisms for elimination of non-tariff barriers on trade and simplification of the existing border crossing procedures in the BSEC Region;

Encourage initiatives for setting up an Information Exchange Mechanism on trade and economic issues in the BSEC Region;

Support the efforts in the sphere of electronic-commerce for enhancing cooperation among the BSEC Member States, inter alia, through following up the relevant international initiatives;

Encourage cooperation among the BSEC Member States in developing the Single Window instrument for trade facilitation;

Support efforts to enhance cooperation of BSEC with other international organizations and institutions in the field of trade and economic development;

Develop effective policies and concrete measures to support the sustainable development of the SMEs sector in the BSEC Region and to help the SMEs to improve their quality performance;

Encourage their respective national institutions to develop new projects of common interest for the BSEC Member States;

Call upon the specialized BSEC Working Groups to explore ways and means to support the implementation of the provisions of the current Joint Declaration, including through the elaboration of projects, with the assistance of international organizations.

The Participants expressed their gratitude to the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Turkey for the successful organization of this Meeting, excellent arrangements and warm hospitality.