

THE BSEC ECONOMIC AGENDA

Towards a sustainable future of the wider Black Sea area

Introduction

Thirty years have passed since the Black Sea Economic Cooperation initiative was launched by the *Bosphorus Statement* during the Istanbul Summit on 25 June 1992. The initiative aimed at fostering interaction and harmony among its members, encouraging multilateral economic cooperation and friendly and good-neighbourly relations. The overall objective was to ensure peace, stability and prosperity in the BSEC Region.

With the adoption of the BSEC Charter (Yalta, 5 June 1998), which entered into force on 1 May 1999, the initiative evolved into a full-fledged regional economic entity, becoming the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

In thirty years, BSEC has become the oldest and most representative regional organization promoting economic cooperation in the wider Black Sea area. Today, BSEC, consisting of 13 Member States, is a solid institution with a Permanent International Secretariat and four Related Bodies, namely, the BSEC Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC), the BSEC Business Council (BSEC BC), the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB) and the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS), as well as Observers and Sectoral Dialogue Partners.

In line with the principles and objectives stipulated in the BSEC Charter the Organization has defined common policy approaches of Member States in summit and ministerial declarations, inter-governmental agreements, plans of action and strategy documents and has launched major projects and initiatives.

On 27 April 2001, the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs adopted the BSEC Economic Agenda and on 11 June 2012 a new BSEC Economic Agenda, which was endorsed by the BSEC Summit held in Istanbul, on 26 June 2012, as roadmaps outlining the action needed to meet the goals set by the BSEC Charter. In the context of the 30th anniversary of BSEC, an updated BSEC Economic Agenda is introduced, which takes into account new developments, challenges and opportunities in the global and regional economic environment including, inter alia, universal sustainable development goals (SDGs) – the UN Agenda 2030) and COVID-19 pandemic.

Taking into account that regional dimension has started to play a larger role in the international and global value chains, the document provides a vision for the role and strategy of the BSEC Organization on the short and medium terms defining priorities, approaches and implementation mechanisms in order to give new impetus to the sustainable economic development of the region for the next ten years, as well as for a sustainable, resilient and inclusive economic recovery from challenges and better preparedness in future. The Member States shall further promote the wider Black Sea area as an important center of economic gravity at the junction of Europe, Asia and Africa with the major role of BSEC in setting objectives. They shall benefit from exchange of best practices and national experience, as well as joint project implementation, harmonization of national frameworks and alignment of their cooperation activities based on a multi-dimensional and diversified approach.

The Member States are determined to make use of the vast potential the Organization avails of, as a platform of dialogue, for playing a more proactive, effective and constructive role in promoting the common goal of a peaceful, stable and prosperous BSEC Region to the interest of all stakeholders, in the spirit of partnership and entrepreneurship, in accordance with the following dispositions:

I. GENERAL GUIDELINES OF ACTION

1. Pursuing Sustainable Development:

1.1. Integrating the three dimensions - economic, social and environmental (including air pollution prevention), aiming at achieving sustainable development ensuring the rational balance between these dimensions with the view to further strengthen economic cooperation in the BSEC Region.

1.2. Taking measures aimed at promoting sustainable peaceful development in the Black Sea region based on the UN principles in their entirety, including respect for the sovereignty of countries and territorial integrity, human rights, peaceful settlement of disputes, refraining from the threat or use of force against the sovereignty of countries and territorial integrity, as a fundamental basis for economic cooperation and sustainable development.

1.3. Continuing the translation of the principles and practice of sustainable development in the national legislation, public policies and institutional mechanisms of the Member States as medium- and long-term objectives.

1.4. Providing suitable conditions for sustainable development based on a balanced and harmonious relationship between social needs, economic activity and the protection of the environment in the BSEC Region.

1.5. Ensuring the sustainable development of human resources with due consideration to the prevailing demographic trends in the region and their impact on employment, education and training, health and social services, gender equality, child protection, migration and social inclusion.

1.6. Involving civil society and business organizations as well as media and the scientific and academic community, to increase public awareness and understanding about sustainable development.

1.7. Promoting environmentally friendly innovative technologies to support sustainable growth, green transition pathways to net-zero emissions/carbon neutrality and economic development.

2. Strengthening the Project-oriented Dimension of the BSEC Organization:

2.1. Undertaking further steps towards consolidating the project-oriented dimension of the BSEC activities by implementing the existing and identifying new projects of common interest for the Member States, and by attaching priority to joint projects, which will reinforce economic cooperation in the region and at the same time may stimulate the interaction among the national economies of the BSEC Member States.

2.2. Facilitating economic development and cooperation in the BSEC Region through:

- a) focusing primarily on achievable actions, programmes and projects of regional interest, which can be implemented within a reasonable time frame;
- b) implementation of projects with regional or trans-regional ownership which contribute directly to the sustainable economic development of the BSEC Member States;
- c) encouragement of cross-border cooperation aiming at projects and programmes agreed upon by the interested Member States to the benefit of local communities;
- d) enhancing the role of private sector in developing bankable projects in the region;
- e) strengthening the network among research institutions for sharing know-how and experiences on innovative projects.

2.3. Enhancing the project-oriented agenda of BSEC through:

- a) creating a greater synergy between the work of BSEC, the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank and the Business Council, including stimulating foreign investments as well as increasing mutual venture capital funds and direct investments in technology ventures between the BSEC countries;
- b) encouraging the financial sustainability of the BSEC Project Development Fund (PDF) and secure its due operation;
- c) encouraging Member States to offer, whenever possible, donations to BSEC PERMIS, in order to establish temporary Funds for financing projects initiated by interested Member States, to be administered in accordance with the principles, rules and regulations contained in the BSEC Statutory Documents, based on a MoU to be concluded between the respective Member State and BSEC PERMIS.

3. Cooperation with International and Regional Organizations and Institutions:

3.1. Further promoting cooperation with the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies, in particular to develop practical and goal-oriented projects, in areas of common interest/

3.2. Continue strengthening the BSEC-EU interaction, on the basis of common interests of BSEC Member States, through flexible and pragmatic dialogue within identified and mutually agreeable priority areas, using the opportunities for increased cooperation offered by EU initiatives in the region.

3.3. Promote mutually beneficial cooperation between BSEC and relevant international and regional organizations as well as financial institutions based on the common interests of the BSEC Member States, through positive and pragmatic dialogue within identified priority areas.

II. PRIORITY AREAS OF ACTION

GOAL 1: Intensifying Intra-regional Trade and Investments

Framework of Action:

1. Ensuring a friendly business environment, especially by providing a stable, predictable, non-discriminatory and transparent regulatory framework.
2. Exchanging information and data on intra-regional trade and investments, in high-tech parks as well as in cluster development.
3. Identifying constraints affecting intra-regional trade, particularly policy barriers that enterprises have to overcome, and other barriers that hamper the trade of goods and services among the Member States.
4. Encouraging harmonization of standards and norms.
5. Enhancing the role of the private sector in the BSEC trade and investment cooperation, including through the BSEC Business Council.
6. Encouraging the establishment of BSEC Networks of Chambers of Commerce and other business organizations/associations of the BSEC Member States, with the assistance of the BSEC Business Council.
7. Recommending to create BSEC networks in the interested BSEC Member States aimed at promoting intra-regional trade and investments.
8. Facilitating visa procedures for business people of the BSEC Member States.
9. Promoting human resource development and capacity building aimed at facilitating trade and economic cooperation among the Member States, including steps to improve training in business education, through innovation and social inclusion.
10. Exploring the possibility to set up a Free Trade Area (FTA).
11. Introducing digital technologies in various fields to support transformation into digital, green and smart economies.
12. Exploring ways to further enhance cooperation among the BSEC Member States in line with provisions of the “Framework for BSEC E-Commerce Cooperation”.
13. Adopting and implementing the “Regional Trade Facilitation Strategy for the BSEC Region” and “Framework for BSEC Single Window Cooperation”, bearing in mind the increased importance of trade facilitation for cross-border trade transactions, including e-commerce which effectively contributes to lowering costs and increasing efficiency in international trade.

GOAL 2: Cooperation among the Customs and Border Crossing Administrations

Framework of Action:

1. Continuing harmonization of customs and border crossing procedures in conformity with the national legislations, with the aim of facilitating the movement of goods and people across national boundaries.
2. Exchanging, where and when possible, preliminary information on vehicles and goods crossing borders between the BSEC Member States.
3. Promoting cooperation among the customs authorities of the BSEC Member States in line with the World Customs Organization requirements, including application of innovative technologies in this regard.

4. Inviting the interested Member States to accede to the BSEC Agreements on Simplification of Visa Procedures for the Businesspeople and for the Professional Lorry Drivers of the Member States, signed by the Republic of Albania, Republic of Armenia, Republic of Moldova and Republic of Türkiye, which reiterated their support for implementation of the mentioned agreements.
5. Promoting closer cooperation among the customs authorities of the BSEC Member States taking into account the growing role of customs in ensuring sustainable trade, including e-commerce transactions.
6. Organizing study-visits to border crossing points in the BSEC Region with a view to define and remove bottlenecks impeding seamless, efficient, fast and sustainable border crossings.

GOAL 3: Establishment of an Efficient, Sustainable and Safe Transport Network

Framework of Action:

1. Promoting sustainable transport systems which meet the economic, social and environmental needs of the people of the Black Sea Region, in order to reduce regional disparities and to link the BSEC Region's transport infrastructure to European and Asian Networks.
2. Accelerating the efforts at the national level and within the BSEC framework aimed at the implementation of the BSEC projects in the field of transport, especially as regards the development of the Black Sea Ring Highway, of the Motorways of the Sea and of the Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods in the BSEC Region.
3. Sharing experiences and exchanging information regarding the transport national strategies and investment projects being implemented in the BSEC Member States, as well as on best practices used on transport.
4. Implementing innovative transport solutions and intelligent transport systems for enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the international transport in the BSEC Region, and promoting the harmonized development and implementation of information support systems in the transport systems of the BSEC Member States.
5. Promoting digitalization of transport documents and other innovative solutions, which facilitate the flow of goods and passengers across borders and provide new services to the transport sector, including automatic issuance and electronic processing of transport and accompanying documents, development of telecommunication networks in transport sector.
6. Elaborating joint transport projects of regional impact within the framework of BSEC mechanisms, public-private partnerships, and with the participation of other regional and international organizations and institutions.
7. Promoting and developing a sustainable intermodal transport and logistics system in the BSEC Region.

8. Developing modern competitive Ro-Ro, ferry and cruise lines in the Black Sea Region benefitting from international experiences, best practices, and the newest equipment and technologies on shipping safety.
9. Further enhancing integration of the environmental dimension into the transport policies in the region and acceleration of the decarbonization of transport and emission reductions through the use of alternative fuels (including biofuels, e-fuels, electricity, LNG, hydrogen). Promoting the use of onshore power supply (or equivalent technology with zero and low emissions).
10. Improving road safety in the BSEC Region in the framework of the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety (2021-2030).
11. Enhancing the cooperation and interaction with the BSEC Sectoral Dialogue Partners, Partner Organizations and other international and regional organizations, institutions and initiatives with a view to implementing the infrastructure projects and increasing the transport capacity of the Region.

GOAL 4: Sustainable Energy and Development of the Black Sea Energy Market

Framework of Action:

1. Enhancing cooperation in the energy sector, including through the elaboration of common approaches and projects, where possible, with participation of experts, academia and private sector.
2. Promoting close cooperation in ensuring universal access to affordable, reliable, safe, sustainable and modern energy services.
3. Achieving efficiency in the use of energy resources through closer cooperation and coordination between energy producers and consumers of the BSEC Region.
4. Taking gradual steps to materialize the vision of transforming the BSEC Region into a model for clean, sustainable, just, affordable and inclusive energy by the year 2050.
5. Encouraging cooperation in the implementation of the provisions of the Green Energy Strategy adopted in 2018 with the view to promoting renewable energy sources, clean technologies and energy efficiency.
6. Encouraging further collaboration within BSEC Green Energy Network to develop cooperation between relevant institutions to promote renewable energy sources and energy efficiency measures and policies.
7. Taking into account less emission intensive fossil fuels which can play an important and effective role in moving towards a low greenhouse gas emission energy future and providing increased flexibility for the integration of variable renewable energy sources.
8. Promoting the development of the projects on interconnection of electric power systems of the BSEC Member States, on applying energy-storage technologies and on sustainable energy-preservation projects.

9. Enhancing further cooperation with relevant international organizations and institutions including the EU in the area of energy.
10. Exchanging experience and best practices, including through the organization of joint educational and research programmes among the energy authorities in BSEC Member States.
11. Facilitating the cooperation of interested parties in the development of hydrocarbon resources in the Black Sea basin, while promoting open, competitive, non-discriminatory and free energy markets, taking into account the existing challenges in the planning and implementation of works.
12. Highlighting the crucial need for international collaboration to protect and enhance resilience of critical transboundary energy infrastructure.

GOAL 5: Environment and Climate Action

Framework of Action:

1. Developing common approaches on green and blue economies to better mitigate climate change effects of the climate, biodiversity and pollution crisis in the BSEC Region.
2. Taking advantage of ecosystem-based approach in the economic and social development programmes of the Member States, to ensure a sustainable development in the BSEC Region.
3. Using strategic environmental impact assessments, where applicable, for all major projects.
4. Developing innovative, environmentally friendly and resource saving technologies.
5. Developing economic and financial instruments as incentives for environmental protection.
6. Developing and approximating regulatory framework for environmental protection and addressing climate change in the BSEC Member States.
7. Encouraging the establishment of the BSEC Information Exchange Mechanism for Environmental Protection.
8. Reaffirming their commitments under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and encouraging to take further steps in climate change processes in the BSEC Region.
9. Building integrated and nature-based solutions for inland, coastal and marine ecosystems and biodiversity preservation and restoration while preventing and mitigating land-based pollution.
10. Minimizing the adverse effects of chemicals on human health and the environment.
11. Further strengthening the cooperation with international organizations and institutions in the respective area.
12. Enhancing the cooperation between BSEC and the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution, in order to avoid duplication of activities, as well as with the programmes and initiatives for the Mediterranean, Caspian and the Danube basins, with the view to develop region-oriented projects of mutual interest.
13. Developing adaptation measures to cope with negative impacts of climate change in the BSEC Region.
14. Submitting emergency response plans to protect the marine ecosystem and organisms against possible sea accidents.

GOAL 6: Food Security and Safety

Framework of Action:

1. Enhancing intra-regional trade in agricultural products.
2. Improving sustainable rural productivity and enhancing the international competitiveness of the Member States in food and agricultural products, in particular through: facilitating the access to new technologies and know-how, scaling up managerial innovations and harmonization and adoption of quality standards for products.
3. Harmonizing the labelling standards, including through the promotion of traditional food and certified agricultural products, as an important part of food quality and food safety, taking into account the obligations of the Member States stemming from their membership in other regional and international organizations and agreements.
4. Promoting exchange of information, experience and best practices among the relevant authorities, state control and national reference laboratories, agrarian research and education institutions and the private sector enterprises in the fields of agriculture, agro-industry, food safety, food waste management and food safety risk assessment in the Member States.
5. Promoting the effective and sustainable use of land and water resources for the agricultural production in the BSEC Member States.
6. Improving the availability of financial services and credits to farmers and processors, as well as developing appropriate insurance systems against risks in agricultural production.
7. Strengthening and promoting cooperation between the vine-growing and wine-making sectors, including through the joint organization of, and participation in wine exhibitions and fairs.
8. Promoting cooperation among the national genetic banks of plants of the Member States for protecting, storing and improving the genetic resources of plants in order to include them in the national programs of selection and to secure biodiversity.
9. Examining ways for simplifying customs formalities and reducing waiting times at the border crossing points.
10. Ensuring increased food production, price stabilization as well as adequate agricultural income, through provision of seeds, technology and finance for the intensification of production, the enhancement of intra-regional trade and the participation of producers of the BSEC Member States in the world market.
11. Promoting regional cooperation for the sustainable management of fishery resources.
12. Strengthening cooperation among state control and the reference laboratories, veterinary services and disease control agencies of the BSEC Member States.
13. Enhancing dialogue on bio-technology methods, taking into consideration the issue of genetically modified food products and radiation control of food.
14. Exchanging experience and good practices regarding sustainable forest management and forests' certification.
15. Promoting the cooperation for the development of sustainable food systems in the BSEC region in line with the outcome of the UN Food Systems Summit held on 23 September 2021.

16. Promoting cooperation among competent authorities of the Member States in the establishment of animal diseases free zone and pest free zone.
17. Promoting the cooperation for the procedures related to the veterinary requirements for import/export of animals (e.g. certification, laboratory testing, additional requirements).
18. Creating conditions for sustainable development of ecologically safe aquaculture in the Black Sea region, with a special focus to regions where this type of activity does not develop or develops very slowly.

GOAL 7: Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals

Framework of Action:

1. Taking into account national capabilities, specifics of the national health system and financial potential of each country, strengthening cooperation in the sphere of public health and in preventing the spread of infectious diseases, such as in the case of the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. Further elaborating the Epidemiological Surveillance and Response Network and establishing a system of regular exchange of information on registered infection diseases among the BSEC Member States.
3. Exchanging experience in carrying out emergency immunization campaigns and work with hard-to-reach-groups of population.
4. Taking into account national capabilities, specifics of the national health system and financial potential of each country, developing cooperation in the field of sanitary protection, according to the national legislation, and exerting efforts to make the “Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Sanitary Protection of the Territories of the Member States of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation” operational, where possible.
5. Strengthening the cooperation with international organizations and institutions, such as WHO, to coordinate efforts to mitigate the adverse impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and similar future health crises.
6. Exchanging of experience on medicine and medical equipment supply of medical institutions, on quality management and control in the health system as well as enhancing cooperation in organizing healthcare and human resources management.
7. Exchanging of experience on Universal Health coverage and on healthy lifestyle promotion.

GOAL 8: Development of Tourism, Protection of Cultural Heritage and Promotion of Modern Culture

Framework of Action:

1. Promoting the BSEC Region as a leading tourist destination.
2. Further strengthening cooperation of the Member States in the field of tourism, including through the exchange of knowledge and good practices.

3. Encouraging the implementation of existing practices and initiatives developed together with regional and international organizations, including the UNWTO, the Council of Europe and the EU, for the targeted and result-oriented development of the tourism sector.
4. Encouraging dialogue in order to promote sustainable and responsible tourism development that ensure the benefits of tourism are enjoyed widely and fairly by adopting green growth strategies that will enable economic expansion while preserving natural and cultural heritage.
5. Fostering harmonization of the travel and tourism related safety guidelines and procedures and sharing of reliable, consistent and easily accessible information on travel restrictions in time of health, natural or other security emergencies to the travellers and citizens of the region.
6. Promoting the use of technology for safe, seamless and touchless travel.
7. Promoting multifaceted travel programs among BSEC Member States, as well as new joint tourist packages for the BSEC Region specially targeting international tourists outside the BSEC Region.
8. Promoting the joint marketing campaign of the BSEC Member States, *inter alia* by participating in international tourism exhibitions, fairs and festivals, where new tourism packages for the BSEC Region could be promoted.
9. Establishing an interdisciplinary network of scientists and experts, in order to promote research and digitalization of cultural heritage of each BSEC Member State, as well as the use of artificial intelligence, augmented reality/virtual reality.
10. Creating a virtual library reflecting the cultural heritage and identity in the BSEC Region.
11. Establishing and facilitating a network among tourism administrations, tourism professionals, travel agencies and associations of the Member States.
12. Developing and implementing joint projects and programmes in the field of maritime, cultural tourism, sports and adventure tourism, health, spa and wellness business tourism.
13. Creating regional hubs and clusters on gastronomy and wine tourism, film-induced tourism as high-value forms of special interest tourism and niche tourism areas, which could maximize the regional dimension of the cooperation in the field of tourism among the BSEC Member States.
14. Building and promoting cooperation networks and developing joint projects in the cultural and creative industries (literature, theatre, dance, music, cinema, audiovisual media, digital and virtual arts).
15. Promoting the exchange of knowledge and expertise among professionals in conservation and restoration of cultural heritage and organizing training courses in this field in the territories of the BSEC Member States.
16. Encouraging Cultural tourism/Cultural routes BSEC projects in the region, their implementation and potential for further development in the BSEC countries, including by taking stock of the Council of Europe Cultural Routes programme.
17. Promoting conservation, restoration and maintenance projects of the architectural heritage in the territory of the BSEC Member States.

18. Further developing cooperation in combating illicit trafficking of cultural property belonging to the archaeological, historical, ethnographical heritage and the arts, inter alia through exchange of information to facilitate the return and restitution of cultural property that is illegally removed from its country of origin, in accordance with the national legislations of the BSEC Member States and relevant international instruments, including 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.
19. Establishing a cooperation network and developing joint projects in the field of traditional arts and encouraging the representation and participation of traditional art performers of the BSEC Member States in international tourism exhibitions, fairs and festivals in order to promote cultural tourism and the cultural heritage of each BSEC Member State.
20. Organizing on-the-job trainings for accommodation and food and beverage sector employees in order to develop human resources and increase capacity in the tourism sector.
21. Providing expert support to exchange information on tourism education.
22. Organizing joint training for tourism business activities entities of the BSEC Member States, with the aim of improving their qualifications and the quality of service.

GOAL 9: Support for the Sustainable Development of the SME Sector:

Framework of Action:

1. Improving SMEs business capacity and performance to increase the productivity of the BSEC Region, create jobs, reduce inequalities, and build a more resilient and sustainable growth.
2. Enhancing business environment for SMEs in the BSEC Region and their access to finance, skills and innovation assets, as well as access of SMEs from the BSEC Member States to other markets, in particular by stimulating their export capacity and promoting cross-border cooperation and business partnership with neighbouring countries.
3. Improving entrepreneurship for innovation, job creation and inclusion in the BSEC Region.
4. Focusing on high technology, innovation, clusters, industrial-technology and software parks and business incubators with the view to further accelerate the green and digital transformations of SMEs.
5. Further developing a support system for innovation and technology at BSEC region, with the view to promoting cooperation among SMEs and the university environment, or research and development institutions.
6. Improving the BSEC Innovation Data Bank, under the coordination of the BSEC PERMIS.
7. Aggregating an information network of regional and Member States financial resources available to SMEs, accessible through the BSEC Innovation Data Bank.
8. Promoting business to business contacts through the “BSEC SME Expert Exchange” programme.
9. Finalizing the establishment of the BSEC Quality Award for SMEs under the coordination of the BSEC PERMIS with active participation of Member States and their business associations.

10. Promoting synergies among the BSEC Related Bodies and strengthening cooperation in the field of SMEs with respective international organizations and institutions.
11. Fostering the contributions of SMEs and entrepreneurs to green economy by accelerating their green transitions.
12. Studying the corporate practices and exchange the experience of state policies in the sphere of supporting the SME sector by large business.

GOAL 10: Closer Cooperation in the field of Banking and Finance

Framework of Action:

1. Making good use by the BSEC Member States, individually as well as on a collective basis, of the existing framework of the BSTDB and other International Financial Institutions active in the BSEC Region.
2. Expanding, where possible, dialogue on issues related to banking and financial sector regulations, supervision and exchange of information among the BSEC Member States.
3. Exploring opportunities for regional cooperation and coordination in combating crime in banking and financial services.
4. Seeking cooperation and support from national institutes and other relevant international bodies in order to provide training of personnel on good practices and evolving standards in the field of banking and finance, through thematic workshops and seminars.
5. Exploring ways for development of financial technologies in the BSEC Member States and for the possibilities to cooperate in the respective area.
6. Promoting development of financial education and the implementation of strategies to improve financial literacy in the BSEC Member States.

GOAL 11: Strengthening Regional Cooperation in Scientific Research and Technology

Framework of Action:

1. Further developing and strengthening of the cooperation in the field of Science and Technology, given the impact of the latter on sustainable economic development and prosperity, and the pressing need to focus more on elevating science, technology and innovation (STI) in both policy and practical terms to strengthen regional cooperation to build better preparedness in response to challenges faced by the BSEC Region.
2. Facilitating closer cooperation in the fields of science and technology among the BSEC Member States, the BSEC Related Bodies and with other partners and international organizations in order to encourage co-funding schemes for formulating and implementing regional research projects.
3. Advocating for the exchange of experiences and good practices within the BSEC and close cooperation with innovation forerunners in the region and beyond, including in the EU.
4. Encouraging the development of targeted activities to contribute to STI capacity building with the aim to address any challenges and to improve the efficiency of STI systems in the

Region, in order to accommodate the needs of a changing environment.

5. Focusing on human resources, capacity building, research infrastructure and innovation as areas of action.
6. Stimulating and strengthening the scientific communities and research personnel through intensive internationalization activities such as mobility schemes, participation in scientific events, promotion of international networking and participation in international projects, in order to contribute to the reduction of isolation of the researchers and mitigate the negative effects of 'brain-drain'.
7. Focusing on blue growth, marine research and innovation, and the preservation of the marine environment for a productive, healthy, resilient and sustainable Black Sea, while considering the special and unique ecosystem characteristics of it; in particular, its unique biodiversity, cultural heritage sites and the new local, national and transboundary policy measures.
8. Promoting the development of the synergies between the Organization's own activities and the ones foreseen in the existing or future projects, including the formulation of proposals for mutually beneficial joint actions.
9. Supporting of formal and informal learning, education and training to allow for acquisition of new skills and the development of knowledge.
10. Promoting digital literacy and the use of technologies benefiting from the fourth industrial revolution, to empower the future researchers and professionals, especially the youth.
11. Promoting STI consciousness and awareness, especially for the youth, through the establishment of award-winning programs for young scientists and researchers.
12. Developing a registry of national innovation related structures of the BSEC Member States and creating the conditions for their effective interaction.
13. Encouraging joint research and training programmes among the Scientific Institutions and Universities in the Member States in line with their priorities.
14. Creating conditions for knowledge and technology transfer to contribute to the sustainable development of the innovation ecosystem in the region, and exploring ways of establishing effective coordination mechanisms to promote a system-wide approach.
15. Identifying innovative ways for combining allocated public and private funds, including through public-private partnerships, and facilitating the access to other available financial resources.
16. Encouraging the establishment of research and innovation/development entities as the platform of joint scientific activities for integration and strengthening capacity building of BSEC Member States.

GOAL 12: Sustainable information society with advanced Information and Communication Technology infrastructure

Framework of Action:

1. Developing joint projects for improvement and growth of Information and Communication Technologies tools and applications.

2. Considering joint measures to provide a safer cyber-space in the BSEC Region and exchanging experiences and best practices on combating use of ICT for criminal purposes.
3. Encouraging connection of the BSEC Region's telecommunication infrastructure to the Trans-European telecommunications networks.
4. Supporting efforts by the BSEC Member States to establish and develop relevant Information and Communication Technologies infrastructure with a view to addressing regional connectivity challenges and promoting viable projects in this sector having regional impact.
5. Encouraging cooperation among the BSEC Member States and with the relevant international organizations with regard to developing communication technologies in the postal service and introducing advanced postal processing, modernization and automation of procedures.
6. Encouraging establishment of companies in the BSEC Member States with the view to creating high added value and providing complex engineering solutions and services, local IT products competitive in international markets.
7. Encouraging the private sector in developing the use of Information and Communications Technologies in the BSEC Member States by promoting investments in new technologies and networking, where possible.
8. Promoting cooperation among the Information and Communication Technology companies, techno parks and incubators of the BSEC Member States.
9. Considering opportunities for the strategic development and interaction of infrastructure networks, either fixed, mobile or satellite in the wider Black Sea area, in the framework of global telecommunications.
10. Enhancing cooperation on new trends in the information technology sector such as digital transformation, 5G, artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, big data, quantum computing, i-Cloud, e-Government.

GOAL 13: Harmonization and Exchange of Economic and Social Statistical Data and Information

Framework of Action:

1. Enhancing the cooperation of the national statistical institutes of the BSEC Member States through the exchange of statistical data, expertise, experiences and best practices, and providing support for publication of periodic reports on the economic performance of the BSEC Member States to make better-informed policy, business and investing decisions.
2. Reactivating and strengthening the work of the existing Coordination Center for the Exchange of Statistical Data and Economic Information, as an Affiliated Center of BSEC.
3. Strengthening the cooperation with relevant international organizations and institutions.

GOAL 14: Higher Standards in Education and Training

Framework of Action:

1. Encouraging adaptation of the educational systems in the BSEC Member States to the current global challenges with a view to increase sustainable growth and the establishment of knowledge-based societies, *inter alia*, through the exchange of information and experiences.
2. Encouraging and support the implementation of projects and initiatives with the use of the ICTs, aimed at promoting the exchange of information and sharing of best practices and experiences, to promote access to inclusive, equitable quality education and promote lifelong opportunities for all, in response to global challenges within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
3. Promoting the scientific research for Sustainable Development of the BSEC Region.
4. Building stronger regional synergy between the relevant authorities of the BSEC Member States and their business and academic communities.
5. Enhancing cooperation in the field of vocational education and training among the BSEC Member States.
6. Promoting lifelong learning opportunities through joint programmes among the relevant institutions in the BSEC Member States, especially, with the use of the ICTs.
7. Supporting joint university research projects and post-graduate programmes.
8. Fostering academic exchange and mobility of teachers, students, researchers, and young scientists of the BSEC Member States, especially for training in the use of modern technologies.
9. Promoting legal and institutional framework for issuing dual diplomas on Black Sea studies.
10. Developing the partnership with initiatives by the United Nations and other international organizations devoted to university cooperation on sustainability.
11. Enhancing the BSEC Member States cooperation with technologically advanced countries, *inter alia* through organizing exchange programmes among national academies of sciences and universities.
12. Promoting and supporting the development of joint academic programmes among the academies of sciences and universities of the BSEC Region.
13. Facilitating the adaptation of the BSEC countries' education systems, teachers, and students to the digital era, to better respond to current global needs and eventual future challenges, with a special focus on strengthening and exchanging good practices on digital skills at all levels of education.
14. Promoting the development and implementation of information educational technologies and modern teaching methods, including distance learning, to ensure the continuity of the educational system.
15. Taking the necessary measures to integrate science and education in order to preserve and promote research, development, science and technology in education system.

GOAL 15: Good Governance and the Rule of Law: Strengthening the capacity of the Member States in conducting civil service and public administration reforms in line with the best governance and administration practices

Framework of Action:

1. Supporting the efforts of the BSEC Member States towards improving national legislations in the sphere of civil service and public administration in line with the best practices.
2. Encouraging the BSEC Member States to promote anti-corruption and integrity in the public sector.
3. Encouraging the BSEC Member States to promote digital government to better use information and communication technologies (ICTs) to embrace good government principles and achieve policy goals.
4. Encouraging the BSEC Member States to promote open government strategies and initiatives based on the principles of transparency, integrity, accountability and stakeholder participation. Facilitating the exchange of experiences on public employment and management aiming to harness the capacity of their workforce to achieve policy goals and promote the principles of good governance.
5. Encouraging the BSEC Member States to better manage employee engagement to achieve better job performance, organizational commitment, productivity and public sector innovation, which can be a powerful counter balance to austerity-driven measures.
6. Facilitating the exchange of experiences, best practices, success stories and lessons learnt in the field of administrative and institutional reform among the BSEC Member States.
7. Conducting studies, with the support of relevant international organizations, in the field of good governance, public sector efficiency and institutional renewal in BSEC Member States.
8. Initiating training of civil servants in innovative practices, with a view to improving the quality and delivery of public services and the simplification of the administrative procedures.
9. Strengthening the cooperation with international organizations and institutions involved in this field.

GOAL 16: Combating Organized Crime, Illegal Trafficking of Drugs and Weapons, Terrorism, Corruption and Money Laundering

Framework of Action:

1. Strengthening the cooperation among the BSEC Member States in combating trafficking of human beings, illicit drugs, weapons and radioactive materials, smuggling, etc.
2. Strengthening the cooperation among the BSEC Member States in combating corruption, money laundering and illicit financial activities and cyber-crime.
3. Supporting the work of the BSEC Network of Liaison Officers on Combating Crime.
4. Elaborating the Annual Review of the trends of transnational crime in the BSEC Region, with the aim to identify, prevent and combat organized crime, including illicit drug trafficking.
5. Encouraging conclusion of cooperation agreements and/or treaties among the BSEC Member States in countering illegal immigration and human trafficking, with special emphasis on mutual legal assistance and extradition.

6. Strengthening cooperation among the border law enforcement and immigration agencies of the BSEC Member States with the aim to achieve integrated border management by, *inter alia*, establishing and maintaining direct channels of communication.
7. Elaborating a BSEC Action Plan on preventing and combating corruption, with the aim of establishing a network for sharing information and best practices among the relevant agencies of the Member States and between them and civil society.
8. Enhancing cooperation with other international organizations in the relevant areas under this Goal.

GOAL 17: Cooperation in Emergency Situations

Framework of Action:

1. Enhancing coordination among the BSEC Member States in preventing and eliminating the consequences of natural and man-made disasters and on providing humanitarian assistance and help on protection of the environment in case of emergency situations or imminent threat thereof.
2. Strengthening cooperation among the BSEC Member States on developing and use of modern technologies to predict natural and man-made disasters through means of space monitoring.
3. Strengthening cooperation in implementing the Agreement among the Governments of the BSEC Member States on Collaboration in Emergency Assistance and Emergency Response to Natural and Man-made Disasters and its Additional Protocol.
4. Promoting cooperation among the seismologists in the BSEC Region with a view to diminishing seismic risks, enhancing early warning, elaborating recommendations for rescue operations and developing regional risk assessment programmes.
5. Drafting of seismic risk maps for the big cities and densely populated areas of the Member States.
6. Establishing effective mechanisms on immediate response and humanitarian assistance in case of emergency situations.
7. Promoting organization of regional trainings, seminars and scientific conferences aimed at the achievement of better application of joint efforts in case of emergency and increase of awareness about the best practices used in emergency situations.
8. Establishing close cooperation with international organizations, institutions and centers in the field of emergency response and humanitarian assistance.

GOAL 18: Development of Technical Cooperation Program focusing on national regional development experiences of the BSEC Member States

Framework of Action:

1. Enhancing cooperation between the national institutions of BSEC countries responsible for regional development, including if needed, through examining the possibility of establishing a relevant BSEC subsidiary organ.

2. Encouraging projects among BSEC countries in the various sectors/areas, such as urbanization, rural development, entrepreneurship, creative industries, tourism, etc.
3. Organizing training and twinning programs among the BSEC Member States in the thematic areas of regional development.
4. Considering the creation of a technical cooperation programme focusing on respective national regional development experiences of the BSEC Member States with a view to enabling the exchange of experience and knowledge between their relevant authorities.

III. IMPLEMENTATION

The Member States reiterate their commitment to further enhance the BSEC and implement the BSEC Economic Agenda.