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PRESS RELEASE ON
THE 32nd MEETING OF THE BSEC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
(Chisinau, 18 June 2015)

The 32nd Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) was held on 18 June 2015, in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova. H.E. Ms. Natalia GHERMAN, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova and the BSEC Chairman-in-Office, chaired the meeting.

In addition to the representatives of the BSEC Member States, the representatives of the BSEC Related Bodies, Observers and Sectoral Dialogue Partners also participated in the Council Meeting.

In the working session, the Secretary General of the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat H.E. Ambassador Dr. Victor TVIRCUN presented his Progress Report regarding the operations and activities of the Secretariat during the first semester of 2015.

The Ministers made statements on issues regarding the latest developments in the region, the Organization as well as bilateral issues. They underlined the strong need to continue the reform efforts in BSEC. Reference was made to the need for the full and sustained implementation of the BSEC Economic Agenda Towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership adopted in 2012 for maximizing the potential of cooperation in the Black Sea region.

At the Council Meeting, the significance of promoting the project and result oriented character of the Organization and strengthening its operational capabilities and mechanisms was highlighted. The importance of focusing on developing viable concrete joint projects which can contribute to sustainable development and the improvement of the lives of people was underlined. In this regard, special reference was made to the Project Management Unit established within the Secretariat in 2014 and the need to allocate more financial resources for project development.

The representatives of the Member States reiterated their willingness to fully tap on the cooperation potential with Observers and Sectoral Dialogue Partners of the Organization, as well as other international partners and institutions. Reference was made particularly to enhancing BSEC's interaction with the United Nations and the European Union.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between BSEC and the Developing-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation by the Secretaries General of the two Organizations. Also, a Memorandum of Understanding for Institutional Cooperation with the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean was signed during the meeting.

Various appointments were made to key positions at the BSEC Secretariat. In this context, the Council appointed Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES (Hellenic Republic) to the position of Secretary General and Ambassador Tahsin BURCUOĞLU (Turkey) as First Deputy Secretary General of the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat. Ambassador Alexander PRISHCHEPOV's (Russian Federation) term as Deputy Secretary General was renewed. Various appointments were made to also other positions at the Secretariat.

At the closing session, the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs adopted Resolutions, Decisions and Recommendations on various issues. In this context, the "Joint Action Plan for Enhancing Cooperation between BSEC and PABSEC (2016-2018)" and the revised "Modalities for BSEC-BSTDB Interaction" were approved for fostering the Organization's cooperation with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank, which are two of the four Related Bodies of BSEC.

During the meeting, the Council appointed the Republic of Bulgaria as the Country-Coordinator of the Working Group on Institutional Renewal and Good Governance, the Republic of Turkey as the Country-Coordinator of the Working Group on Agriculture and Agro-Industry and the Russian Federation as the Country-Coordinator of the Working Group on Energy for a period of two years. Romania was reappointed as the Country-Coordinator of the Working Group on Cooperation in Combating Crime in particular in its Organized Forms.

The Observer status of the Republic of Belarus, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Italian Republic, the Republic of Tunisia and the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution were renewed for two-year periods. The Black Sea Broadcasting Regulatory Authorities Forum (BRAAF) was granted Sectoral Dialogue Partnership Status, while the said status of the International Network for SMEs (INSME) was renewed for a two-year term.

At the conclusion of the meeting, a ceremony took place whereby the Republic of Moldova handed over the Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC to Romania. Romania will officially assume the Chairmanship as of 1 July 2015, for a period of six months until 31 December 2015.

During its Chairmanship period corresponding to the first half of 2015, the Republic of Moldova, under the motto "Bringing Stability, Ensuring Consensus", guided and promoted the activities of the Organization. The Moldovan Chairmanship organized many events which focused on the key areas of BSEC cooperation. The meeting of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (Chisinau, 18 June 2015) and the meetings of the BSEC Ministers of Transport (Chisinau, 14 May 2015), Economy (Chisinau, 29 May 2015) and Healthcare (Chisinau, 5 June 2015), as well as the International Conference on "Professional Education and Economic Needs of the Black Sea Region" (Chisinau, 27 April 2015) constituted the highlights of the calendar of events of the Moldovan Chairmanship.

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, stability and prosperity 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.¹ The BSEC countries encompass an area of approximately 20 million square kilometers with 335 million people. Agriculture and agro-industry, banking and finance, combating organized crime, culture, customs matters, education, emergency assistance, energy, environmental protection, exchange of statistical data and information, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, information and communication technologies, institutional renewal and good governance, science and technology, SMEs, tourism, trade and economic development and transport are among the fields of cooperation within the framework of the Organization.

BSEC has four Related Bodies², 17 Observers³ and 15 Sectoral Dialogue Partners.⁴

On the occasion of its 20th anniversary in 2012, the Organization introduced the Economic Agenda Towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership in order to face the new challenges and opportunities in the global and local environment. This comprehensive regional strategy sets goals in 17 priority areas of action. It also provides recommendations to further strengthen the Organization.

¹ The 12 BSEC Member States are Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine.

² The Parliamentary Assembly of the BSEC (PABSEC), the BSEC Business Council (BSEC BC), the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB) and the International Center for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) are the four Related Bodies of BSEC.

³ Austria, Belarus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Poland, Slovak Republic, Tunisia, USA, the European Commission, Black Sea Commission, Energy Charter Secretariat and International Black Sea Club have Observer status in BSEC.

⁴ Hungary, Japan, Republic of Korea, Montenegro, Slovenia, Iran, Black Sea International Shipowners Association (BINSIA), Black and Azov Seas Ports Association (BASPA), Union of Road Transport Association in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Region (BSEC-URTA), Black Sea Region Association of Shipbuilders and Shiprepairers (BRASS), Black Sea University Network (BSUN), Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR), Danube Commission, International Network for SMEs (INSME) and World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) have Sectoral Dialogue Partnership status in BSEC.