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**PRESS RELEASE ON THE WORKING VISIT OF  
THE BSEC PERMIS SECRETARY GENERAL TO THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

The Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES paid a working visit to the Republic of Serbia on 9-10 March 2016. During the visit, cooperation between BSEC and Serbia, as well as the preparations for the upcoming BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office of Serbia (1 July – 31 December 2016) were discussed, with Ministers and other high-level officials from the Serbian Government.

During the talks with the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Mr. Ivica DACIC, Secretary General CHRISTIDES informed his counterpart on the key issues and activities of BSEC. In this context, the Secretary General provided information on the efforts to enhance the project-oriented character and to increase the efficiency of the Organization, as well as budgetary issues.

Secretary General CHRISTIDES underlined the importance of the forthcoming Serbian Chairmanship, as it will be the last Chairmanship leading to the year 2017 when the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of BSEC will be observed. Expressing confidence in the success of the Serbian Chairmanship, the Secretary General pledged the full support of the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat to achieve the targeted outcomes of the Serbian Chairmanship. In this context, the Secretary General informed H.E. Mr. DACIC that the participation of Serbia as shareholder to the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank will have distinct advantages for the country.

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Mr. Ivica DACIC, emphasizing the importance attached by Serbia to BSEC, informed that the Serbian Government has already launched the preparations to Chair the Organization in the second semester of 2016. He stated that during its Chairmanship, Serbia will focus, among other areas, on the enhancement of economic cooperation through initiating joint projects; fostering cooperation in the sphere of transport; promoting cooperation with other regional and international organizations and initiatives, including the EU; and increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization. H.E. Mr. DACIC noted that Serbia is aware of the political and other challenges confronting BSEC and the Serbian Chairmanship, while highlighting his belief that these challenges would be resolved in a spirit of constructive cooperation, having in mind the economic character of the Organization.

More detailed discussions regarding the preparations for the incoming Chairmanship of Serbia took place during a working luncheon with the officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs responsible for BSEC Affairs, including Ambassador Katarina LALIC SMAJEVIC, Deputy Assistant Minister for Multilateral Affairs and Ambassador Aleksandar TASIC, Head of Department of Multilateral Economic Cooperation.

In Belgrade, Secretary General CHRISTIDES also met with the high-level officials of the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure, namely, State Secretaries Mr. Miodrag POLEDICA and Mr. Dejan TRIFUNOVIC, as well as Assistant Minister Ms. Tatjana JOVANOVIC. During the discussions, activities and projects of BSEC in the sphere of transport were addressed comprehensively.