



**ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION**  
**Permanent International Secretariat**  
*Istanbul / Turkey*

Fax: (+90212) 2296336 E-mail: [info@bsec-organization.org](mailto:info@bsec-organization.org) [www.bsec-organization.org](http://www.bsec-organization.org)

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**PRESS RELEASE ON**  
**THE PARTICIPATION OF THE BSEC PERMIS SECRETARY GENERAL**  
**TO THE 7TH GLOBAL FORUM OF THE UNITED NATIONS ALLIANCE OF**  
**CIVILIZATIONS**  
**(Baku, 25-27 April 2016)**

The Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES attended the 7th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) held in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan, on 25-27 April 2016.

- He delivered a statement at the High Level Meeting of the Group of Friends of the UNAOC on 27 April. In his statement, drawing attention to the drastic rise of intolerance, xenophobia and violent extremism around the world, the Secretary General underlined the need to make use of formal and non-formal education, youth programs and conventional and social media in order to promote pluralism, inclusiveness and openness to diversity in societies. He stated the importance of the involvement of the private sector, civil society organizations, public figures, religious leaders, opinion makers and artists in these efforts. He stressed that with its universal character, the UNAOC can play a key role by promoting and mobilizing coordinated action and replicating best practices.

The Secretary General also underlined the need for specially designed education modules in all countries for children, starting from kindergarten, to teach them of equality of all human beings, regardless of their nationality, race, religion, ethnicity, background and culture.

- During the UNAOC 7th Global Forum, the Secretary General took active part in a number of side events and breakout sessions, including the one titled “The New Silk Road: A Route of Peace”. Secretary General CHRISTIDES expressed the aspiration of the BSEC PERMIS to become an institutional supporter of the initiative, together with UNESCO, the UNAOC and other international entities, a proposal that was welcomed by the organizers.

- On 27 April, on the sidelines of the Baku Forum, a signing ceremony took place for the Memorandum of Understanding between BSEC and the UN Alliance of Civilizations. The

MoU, which was signed by the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES and the High Representative of the UNAOC H.E. Nassir Abdulaziz AL-NASSER, confirms BSEC's commitment to deepen its interaction and cooperation with the Alliance. The MoU will allow the two sides to work together at a more concrete level in preserving cultural diversity and promoting intercultural dialogue; fostering mutual understanding and respect, through formal and informal education activities; and building bridges among societies to resolve issues that divide them.

On the occasion of the signing of the MoU, the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General had a bilateral meeting with the UNAOC High Representative AL-NASSER. The two sides stated that they will make sure that the MoU does not remain as a mere symbolic expression of goodwill. In this context, they had preliminary discussions on possible ideas for concrete cooperation in order to start implementing the MoU as soon as possible. At the conclusion of their discussions, they agreed to continue their exchange through correspondence and possibly review developments during their next meeting in New York, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

### Background Information

BSEC attaches great importance to efforts for enhancing respect, understanding and cooperation among nations and peoples of different cultures and religions, being itself an Organization of 12 Member States with different religious and cultural backgrounds. It is in this context that BSEC became a member of the Group of Friends of the UN Alliance of Civilizations in 2009.

11 of the 12 BSEC Member States are at the same time members of the UNAOC Group of Friends.<sup>1</sup> 5 of these 11 countries have developed national strategies to implement the Recommendations in the High Level Group Report at the national, regional and local levels.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine.

<sup>2</sup> Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Russia and Turkey.