



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  
IN THE “SILK ROAD COUNTRIES FORUM: ENERGY, RESOURCES AND  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”  
(Astana, 25-26 May 2016)**

The Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS, Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES participated in the event “*Silk Road Countries Forum: Energy, Resources and Sustainable Development*”, which was organized by the *BOAO Forum for Asia* in the framework of the prestigious annual “*Astana Economic Forum*”, held in the capital of Kazakhstan, on 25-26 May 2016.

The main objective of the event was to discuss initiatives and proposals related to the idea to establish a modern day “Silk Road” through various linkage routes connecting Europe to East Asia and, at the same time, to open up and revive the economies of the landlocked Asian Republics.

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General participated in the panel on “*Europe-Asia: Infrastructure Connectivity*”. He underlined the importance that the projects promoted by BSEC, especially in the spheres of transport infrastructure and trade facilitation, have for the overall efforts to establish the above linkage routes, considering that whichever routes are chosen, they will cross through “BSEC territory”, given the vast region covered by the BSEC Member States.

Secretary General Ambassador CHRISTIDES briefed the participants on the main transport infrastructure projects promoted by BSEC, namely, the *Black Sea Ring Highway (BSRH)*, the *Motorways of the Sea in the BSEC Region (MoS)* and the efforts to harmonize and simplify procedures, formalities and the necessary documentation to alleviate or diminish the time consuming border-crossing procedures for trucks and railway wagons.

The Secretary General underlined that the BSRH will unite all littoral Black Sea States and the other BSEC Member States in the Balkans and the Caucasus region. When completed, it will offer new alternatives for transport and trade of goods and services and the movement of people, thus facilitating a faster connectivity between Europe and Asia. He added that this highway will be connected to the *Pan-European Corridors Network* and the network of routes connecting Europe to Asia (TRACECA).

Concerning the project of the *Motorways of the Sea in the BSEC Region*, the Secretary General stated that it entails the upgrading of infrastructure and facilities in 41 ports of Member States, ports that not only dot the coastline of the Black Sea, but also the Adriatic, the Ionian, the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean Seas, thus covering a vast number of transport possibilities. At the same time, the idea of inter-modal transports is also promoted, in order to further facilitate and speed the transport of goods, services and people.

The Secretary General further underlined that for BSEC, the modern concept of the “Silk Road” does not only imply transports, infrastructure projects, trade, energy etc., but that it also includes the promotion of inter-cultural dialogue and tourism among the States concerned. He added that, in all the above efforts and initiatives, technology and innovation have a significant role to play. He mentioned the possibility of trucks or railway wagons crossing borders without the use of easily lost or forged documents, but with all the necessary data being electronic.

Finally, the Secretary General reiterated that BSEC should be seen as a potential “natural partner” for initiatives or projects promoting the modern concept of the “Silk Road” and that BSEC stands ready to study any proposal for cooperation to achieve, together with other interested parties, safer and faster link routes between Asia and Europe.