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**PRESS RELEASE**  
**ON**  
**THE PARTICIPATION OF THE BSEC PERMIS SECRETARY GENERAL TO**  
**THE "INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON WORLD CIVILIZATIONS**  
**AND CREATIVE TOURISM"**  
**(Sofia, 29 November - 1 December 2016)**

The Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS, Ambassador Michael B. Christides, participated at the *International Congress on World Civilizations and Creative Tourism* (Sofia, 29 November - 1 December 2016) upon the invitation of H.E. Ms. Nikolina Angelkova, Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria and Mr. Taleb Rifai, Secretary General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

The main aim of the Congress was to provide a useful platform to public and private tourism stakeholders to discuss and exchange views on the development and implementation of new and innovative forms of cultural tourism.

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General participated in the High Level Meeting together with other important personalities (H.R.H. Princess Dana Firas - President of PETRA National Trust/Jordan, King Simeon II of Bulgaria, Mr. Nabi Avcı - Minister of Culture and Tourism/Turkey, Mr. Nazım Samadov - Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism/Azerbaijan, Ms. Mihaela Vrabete - State Secretary of Tourism/Romania, Mr. Yiorgos Tziallas - Secretary General for Tourism Policy and Development/Greece, Mr. Stanislav Rusu - Director General of Tourism Agency/Moldova, Ms. Marija Labovic - CEO National Tourism Organization of Serbia), under the moderation of Mr. Max Foster, CNN Anchor and Correspondent.

In his intervention and responding to the questions of the moderator, Ambassador Christides underlined that the BSEC Organization constitutes a precious vehicle for promoting the much needed - and expected - cooperation among its Member States, in the important field of Tourism. Through concrete initiatives and projects, the BSEC Working Groups on Cooperation in Tourism and on Culture have been promoting - and continue to promote - the collective tourism and cultural identity of the wider Black Sea Region, enjoying the valuable help of related organizations and entities, especially that of UN

World Tourism Organization.

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General also noted that the most important common denominator in the addresses of all speakers was the obvious necessity for greater regional cooperation, in order to achieve the goals of sustainable cultural and creative Tourism. This very distinct fact further enhances the role that BSEC can assume in the realization of enhanced touristic cooperation, defining, at the same time, the opportunities offered to the Organization's Member States, in order to take even greater advantage of BSEC's services.

On the sidelines of the Congress, Secretary General Ambassador Christides held a working meeting with H.E. Mr. Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary General, during which details concerning the concrete cooperation between the two Organizations were discussed. The two sides agreed to further pursue the dense action plan of common endeavors envisaged for the next year.-