



ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Permanent International Secretariat – The Secretary General

BS/C.2023.0009

Istanbul, 30 January 2023

Excellency,

In response to your kind invitation of 20 December 2022 I am sharing with you **BSEC PERMIS's views, priorities and recommendations for the 'New Agenda for Peace'**.

At the outset I would like to assure you that we consider this initiative as highly significant for our future endeavors. At a time when global peace and security are increasingly challenged, world leaders and international institutions are called more than ever to multiply their efforts to promote effective responses to security challenges and increase their contribution there to.

No need to demonstrate why it is so important and timely. Suffice to say that, in this period of time unfortunate and grave developments take place in many parts of the world, including the wider Black Sea Region which seriously affect security. It is necessary to realize the multidimensional character of security and that a particularly important dimension thereof is the economic dimension, the appropriate address of which can be an important peace keeping and peace strengthening factor.

Before anything else, it deserves to be highlighted that experience so far clearly shows that strong economic relations, international and regional cooperation and integration, be it bilateral or multilateral, has not only been beneficial in terms of economic development but it helped promoting stability, mutual understanding and good neighborly relations, i.e., security. That explains the existence of so many regional frameworks for economic cooperation.

These were some of the principles laid down at the foundation of the Black Sea Economic Organization - BSEC, which, by the way, just marked its 30th Anniversary. Indeed, thirty years have passed since the Black Sea Economic Cooperation initiative was launched by the Bosphorus Statement during the Istanbul Summit on 25 June 1992. This initiative aimed at fostering interaction and harmony among its members, encouraging multilateral economic cooperation and friendly and good-neighborly relations. The overall objective was to ensure peace, stability and prosperity in the BSEC Region especially through means of enhanced economic cooperation. With the adoption of the BSEC Charter (Yalta, 5 June 1998), entered into force on 1 May 1999, the initiative evolved into a full-fledged regional economic entity, becoming the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

1/3

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In thirty years, BSEC has become the oldest and most representative regional organization promoting economic cooperation in the wider Black Sea area. Today, BSEC, consisting of 13 Member States (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, The Republic of North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Türkiye, Russian Federation and Ukraine) and having 10 Observers and 10 Sectoral Dialogue Partners, is a solid institution with a Permanent International Secretariat (BSEC PERMIS) and four Related Bodies, namely, the BSEC Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC), the BSEC Business Council (BSEC BC), the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB) and the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS).

In line with the UN internationally acclaimed principles and based on international law the BSEC initiated common policy approaches of Member States and has launched major projects and initiatives. Looking back to the past three decades, one should recognize BSEC has contributed to bringing prosperity in the Black Sea region, a region which is quite a complex one, a “microcosm” with many sensitivities, to say the least, as far as it includes States which are also Members of the EU, others that are Members of the Eurasian Economic Union and others that are still in the midst of accession procedures to one or the other. In addition to that, BSEC is covering an area of paramount geostrategic importance: it actually forms the bridge between Europe and Asia, while at the same time it is a significant energy hub and a vital transportation crossroads between North-South and East-West. BSEC is now the most representative and institutionally mature regional economic organization in the wider Black Sea area. It is an economic organization, but the definition of economic given by its Charter is very wide indeed, covering areas such as economic development, customs and SMEs, trade and services, transport, agriculture, energy, environment, tourism, culture, education, science and technology and even good governance, emergency assistance and combatting organized crime; the list is not exhaustive.

From 2001 on BSEC has based its policies and activities on medium- and long- term strategic plan called the BSEC Economic Agenda. This strategic document is regularly updated to take into account new developments, challenges and opportunities in the global and regional economic environment, including, inter alia, the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs) and COVID-19 pandemic needs.

The Member States are determined to make use of the vast potential the Organization avails of, as a platform of dialogue, for playing a more proactive, effective and constructive role in promoting the common goal of a peaceful, stable and prosperous BSEC Region to the interest of all stakeholders, in the spirit of partnership and entrepreneurship.

It is from this perspective that concrete achievements have been so far registered and which have certainly enhanced the relevance of BSEC:

First, for 30 years it gathers around a table, many times during a year, representatives from all Member States in order to discuss and promote projects of benefit to all; so, apart from a vehicle promoting dialogue and understanding, the BSEC Organization can also be viewed as a very useful and necessary, first-level, confidence building mechanism.

Second, BSEC provides a framework for the elaboration of policies, guidelines and documents of strategic nature, which also contain specific targets in all areas of sectoral cooperation and a practical road-map for their effective implementation.

Third, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation prioritized trade facilitation and investment promotion through, inter alia, development of transport infrastructure in the Region, efforts aimed at harmonizing and simplifying procedures, introduction of more automation and digitalization in the procedures concerning the transport of goods and services. Infrastructure- connectivity, energy, environment-climate change, agriculture, education, tourism have been dealt with in the various frameworks of multilateral regional dialogue and cooperation.

Fourth, BSEC with a view to optimizing results of its policies has sought close cooperation, correlation and synergies with other regional and international organizations active in or with impact on the BS area and Balkan Region like for example: UN Specialized agencies, EU, but also ICE, UfM, AII, CoE-Partial Agreement on Routes of Culture, WTO, WB, EBRD etc.

Based on its regional experience and in view of the unfortunate developments that impacted the Black Sea region BSEC PERMIS believes that in shaping the New Agenda for Peace prominent place should be given in pre- and post- conflict responses as a set of action to prevent emergence or re-emergence of potentially peace-disturbing risks. Investing in 'prevention is in our view of paramount importance. To this end closer and consistent cooperation with regional institutions, especially those promoting economic cooperation can be of critical importance since they are in the forefront of sensing and understanding of potential conflict underlying drivers and systems of influence.

Experience has shown that promoting and facilitating trade, transport, introducing innovation in businesses - with appropriate attention being given to SMEs as the backbone of societies - as well as enhancing cooperation in the energy sector including promotion of new and renewable sources of energy, promoting cultural understanding and closer contacts between peoples of the region are only a few examples that can substantially act as positive steps towards conflict prevention and peace promotion.

The Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization as the only regional Organization encompassing all states of the Black Sea, Caucasus and southern Balkans is ready and willing to closer work with the international community and especially UN system and regional organizations and initiatives for promoting the common goal, namely an effective 'Agenda for Peace'.

Sincerely Yours,



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Secretary General

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3/3

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