

Mr. Chairman,

Esteemed Participants,

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization Permanent International Secretariat (BSEC PERMIS), I want to kindly **thank the International Barents Secretariat** for the invitation and an opportunity to speak at this meeting. We hope that the cooperation between the two Secretariats will continue to be further developed although we are on both ends of Europe.

The Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) is **the oldest and most representative regional** economic intergovernmental organization in the wider Black Sea area. The BSEC region **is located** on two continents and **covers** a geography encompassing the territories of the Black Sea littoral States, the Balkans and the Caucasus **with the area** of nearly 20 millions square kilometers.

It **represents** the area of 330 million people and **brings** together 12 States of the region, namely Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine.

BSEC was **launched in 1992** as a regionally **owned initiative**. The main pillars of initiative have been **inclusiveness, transparency and regional ownership**.

BSEC has four **Related Bodies** - the Parliamentary Assembly, the BSEC Business Council, the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank and the International Centre for Black Sea Studies.

We provide a **structure for interaction and cooperation** to our Member States. Our **aim** is to **collaborate in specific economic areas to create mutually beneficial projects and address key issues**.

Trade and economic development, banking and finance, transport, energy, agriculture and agro-industry, environmental protection, combating organized crime,

emergency assistance, healthcare, science and technology, culture, education, customs matters, SME's, tourism, are among the **fields of cooperation** within the framework of the Organization.

The BSEC has more than **20 Working Groups**. They **cover an extensive area** of sector priorities. Working Groups **bring together experts** from the relevant Ministries of the BSEC Member States and **define Action Plans** in the relevant areas of cooperation.

The activity of the BSEC Working Groups is regularly **monitored by the Committee of Senior Officials**. Their **priorities** are periodically **redefined** by sector Ministerial Meetings, **while the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs** is the principal regular decision making organ.

In line with the principles and objectives defined by its Charter and with the aim of utilizing more effectively their human, natural and other resources, **BSEC has defined the common approaches** of its Member States in summit and ministerial declarations, intergovernmental agreements, plans of action and strategy documents and **has launched projects and initiatives which are of interest to them**.

In 2012, the Heads of States and Governments of the BSEC Member States endorsed the ***BSEC Economic Agenda Towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership***, a strategic document for guiding the functioning of our Organization in the years to come, by setting concrete sector priorities.

This document **provides a practical road-map** for the future activity of BSEC. We think that its **effective implementation**, with the support of the Member States is of **paramount importance** for Organization and for the wider Black Sea region as a whole.

In a separate **chapter, devoted to** the priority areas of action, the Economic Agenda sets **17 goals**, indicating for each of them a number of themes for action.

Since 1st July 2014, the rotating BSEC **Chairmanship-in-Office** is assured by Greece, which has set an ambitious set of priorities aimed streamlining the activity of the Organization and putting particular emphasis on the implementation of the BSEC Economic Agenda.

Additionally, the **BSEC Economic Agenda** has provided a concrete basis for enhancing our cooperation with our **international partners** including our 17 Observers* and 17 Sector Dialogue Partners**. These include many countries and international organizations from Europe, Asia and North America like the United States, Japan and Republic of Korea, which are able, through their participation in BSEC activities, to follow and contribute to the evolving efforts for regional cooperation.

In BSEC, we also particularly value our cooperation with other **international and regional organizations** in the wider Black Sea area. BSEC, which has Observer status in the UN General Assembly, has very close and fruitful working relations with the UN system and its specialized agencies. And, last but not least, the **European Commission** also holds the status of Observer in our Organization.

The BSEC Permanent International Secretariat maintains a close relationship also with the Office of Economic and Environmental Activities of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (**OSCE**) through exchange of information on activity, as well as participation in its events.

* **Observers:** Austria, Belarus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Poland, Slovak Republic, Tunisia, USA, International Black Sea Club, Energy Charter Secretariat, Black Sea Commission, European Union.

** **Sectoral Dialogue Partners:** Hungary, Montenegro, UK, Japan, Slovenia, Republic of Korea, Black Sea International Shipowners Association (BINSIA), Black and Azov Seas Ports Association (BASPA), Union of the Road Transport Associations in the BSEC Region (BSEC-URTA), Black Sea Region Association of Shipbuilders and Shiprepairers (BRASS), Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR), Danube Commission, International Network for SMEs (INSME), Black Sea Universities Network (BSUN).

These **international links** allow us to profit from the expertise of our partners and increase the effect of our efforts in the pursuit of common objectives.

Dear Colleagues,

The success of BSEC depends on the concrete and effective implementation of **common projects**. We do believe that projects are essential to increase BSEC's impact in the region and are expected to become more significant for the Organisation in the coming years. BSEC is currently involved in the drafting, approval, implementation and evaluation of projects through diverse mechanisms and procedures.

There are two BSEC projects of major significance. These are the **Black Sea Ring Highway project** and the project on the development **the Motorways of the Sea** in the BSEC region. They are related to the development of transport links in the region. These projects are expected to do much to foster intra-BSEC trade, as well as tourism, infrastructure, transport, investments and economic prosperity among the countries of the Black Sea as it will link the European Road Network to that of Asia.

The **Black Sea Ring Highway** project envisages a four lane ring highway system, approximately 7700 km long, to connect the BSEC Member States with each other. The project on the development of the **Motorways of the Sea** in the BSEC region, on the other hand, is about strengthening the maritime links among the ports of the BSEC Member States.

Besides transport, one of the areas where the potential of Black Sea economic cooperation is most visible is in the area of **trade**. Currently, intra-BSEC trade and investment are not at the desired level. Despite the great potential of our region BSEC countries representing almost to around 8% of the world economy, with a total GDP of 3,4 trillion US Dollars. Therefore, various initiatives have been launched to contribute to the improvement of the trade situation. For example, BSEC has been cooperating with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on this matter.

In **energy cooperation**, green energy and supporting projects that promote sustainable energy development are priorities for the Organization. Another main priority for BSEC is **to ensure the stability and security of energy supplies by developing a BSEC regional energy strategy** and a 2020 strategy. BSEC is also committed to **efforts towards ensuring the integration of the energy markets of BSEC and the EU** by developing a joint BSEC-EU Plan of Action in energy and encouraging cooperation with the Energy Community.

Another area where BSEC is active is **environmental protection**. Currently, BSEC Members are discussing the **modalities of establishing an information exchange mechanism for environmental protection**. There is also an **ongoing study** on the possibilities of strengthening **cooperation with other organizations**, institutions and partners on issues related to the protection and rehabilitation of the Black Sea marine environment.

Furthermore, a draft of “**Climate change Adaptation strategy in the Black region**” was completed, jointly with the UNDP. After the adoption, the Member States could start developing projects with the assistance of the existing global funds in the Climate Change domain.

While we are working to promote the BSEC Region as one of the leading **tourism** destinations of the world, our attention is also focused on the cultural heritage, protection of cultural monuments and archaeological sites, including cooperation to combat illicit trafficking of stolen cultural property.

In the field of **education and science and technology**, the priority is given to the questions of the academic mobility and developing a registry of national innovation related structures.

Dear Colleagues,

BSEC has passed the long way of 22 years in hard and intense activity. Currently Organization enters into new era with new realities. Aims set forth at the beginning of 90-th today is being subsequently transformed into more impressive

regional challenges. In such situation the structure and working approach of the Organization also **be considered subject to modernization.**

We believe that the activities of the BSEC countries **on promoting practical unpoliticized interaction** in the interests of all Member States, aiming for concrete results in the implementation of projects that will contribute to development and enhanced competitiveness of countries of Organization, **is worth the effort.**

Mr. Chairman,

Dear Colleagues,

Let me, once more **thank the International Barents Secretariat** for opportunity to speak at this meeting and for the hospitality and wish you all success in your deliberation with concrete and promising results.

Thank you for your attention.