



ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Permanent International Secretariat

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE BSEC WORKING GROUP ON COOPERATION IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Videoconference, 21 April 2021

1. The Meeting of the BSEC Working Group on Cooperation in Science and Technology was held online, on 21 April 2021.
2. The Meeting was chaired by Mrs. Melike ERGÜN, Programme Coordinator, International Cooperation Department, TÜBİTAK, Republic of Turkey.
3. Opening remarks were made by the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES.
4. The meeting was attended by representatives from the following BSEC Member States:
 - Republic of Armenia
 - Republic of Azerbaijan
 - Republic of Bulgaria
 - Georgia
 - Hellenic Republic
 - Republic of Moldova
 - Russian Federation
 - Republic of Serbia
 - Republic of Turkey
 - Ukraine
5. The representative of the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) attended the meeting as the BSEC Related Body.
6. The following BSEC Observers attended the Meeting:
 - Arab Republic of Egypt
 - Hungary
 - State of Israel
 - United States of America

7. The representative of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) attended the meeting as the BSEC Sectoral Dialogue Partner.

8. The List of Participants of the Meeting is attached as **Annex I**.

AGENDA ITEM 1: ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

9. The Draft Agenda of the Meeting was discussed and adopted. The Agenda, as adopted, is attached as **Annex II**.

AGENDA ITEM 2: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESOLUTIONS, DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BSEC COUNCIL, AND THE FOLLOW-UP OF THE DECLARATIONS AND JOINT STATEMENTS ADOPTED BY THE MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

10. The Working Group took note of the information provided by the BSEC PERMIS on the implementation of the Resolutions, Decisions and Recommendations of the BSEC Council and the follow up of the Declarations and the Statements of the Ministers in charge of Science and Technology, since the last Meeting of the Working Group on Cooperation in Science and Technology (BSEC Headquarters, 15 November 2019).

11. The Member States were requested to update the list of the coordinates of their respective focal points in charge of Science and Technology (attached as **Annex III**) in order to facilitate direct communication between the BSEC PERMIS and the relevant Ministries.

AGENDA ITEM 3: CONSIDERATION OF THE EVALUATION REPORT BY THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, THE PREVIOUS COUNTRY-COORDINATOR, ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKING GROUP DURING ITS COORDINATORSHIP (1 JULY 2018 – 30 JUNE 2020)

12. The delegation of the Russian Federation presented the Evaluation Report on the activities of the Working Group for their coordination period (1 July 2018 – 30 June 2020), mainly focusing on the conclusions and opportunities/proposals for further initiatives and actions of the Working Group (**attached as Annex IV**).

13. The Working Group took note of the Evaluation Report and expressed its appreciation for the work of the Russian Federation in its capacity as the Country-Coordinator.

AGENDA ITEM 4: PRESENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE PERIOD OF 1 JANUARY 2021 – 31 DECEMBER 2022 BY THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY, THE CURRENT COUNTRY-COORDINATOR OF THE WORKING GROUP

14. The delegation of the Republic of Turkey, the current Country-Coordinator, elaborated and presented the draft Plan of Action of the Working Group on Cooperation in Science and Technology covering the period from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2022, including the general objectives and key priorities of the Working Group, as well as the challenges and opportunities for further development of projects and initiatives within the Working Group.

15. The Working Group considered, amended and approved the presented Plan of Action for its submission to the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) and expressed its appreciation for the work of the delegation of the Republic of Turkey in the preparation of the above-

mentioned document. The Action Plan, as approved by the Working Group, is attached as **Annex V**.

AGENDA ITEM 5: SHARING EXPERIENCES AND EXCHANGING VIEWS ON THE SITUATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE FIELD OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN THE BSEC MEMBER STATES

16. The Working Group discussed the challenges faced in the context of the pandemic and shared good practices in the field. The importance of cooperation and knowledge exchange was emphasized as crucial for addressing and overcoming the overall pandemic consequences. Moreover, the role of Science and Technology has become even more decisive as it could significantly help build swift resilience and achieve tangible and sustainable results.

17. Representatives from the participating BSEC Member States provided a comprehensive overview of the initiatives and activities of their relevant Ministries and agencies carried out during the pandemic outbreak, as well as lessons learned and actions taken to overcome the negative impact of Covid-19. It was underlined that post-pandemic reconstruction involves long-term efforts, involving a coalition of many different stakeholders to identify pathways for revitalization and recovery. In this context, the STI sector and digitalisation, the promotion of innovation and the use of innovative approaches to adapt to the new market requirements, identification of new skills and capacity-building have been identified as key priorities for the post-pandemic era. All the presentations provided by the Member States under this Agenda item are attached to the Report as **Annex VI**.

18. In addition, the Working Group took note of information presented by the representative of the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) on the outcome of the 11th International Black Sea Symposium entitled “A collective recovery for the Black Sea Region in the post-covid era”, held online on 20 April 2021, aimed at addressing the current challenges and better supporting sustainable socioeconomic recovery in the post-pandemic era.

19. Acknowledging the significance of the issue, the Working Group took note of the ideas and proposals expressed in the presentations and statements under this agenda item and decided to continue the practice of reviewing the trends and performance in the STI sector in the BSEC region. The Working Group invited interested Member States to send to PERMIS the information on the activities of their national institutions responsible for STI in the context of COVID-19 pandemic.

AGENDA ITEM 6: EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON A DRAFT OF THE NEW BSEC ACTION PLAN ON COOPERATION IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (2020–2024)

20. The representative of the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) presented the updated draft of the Fourth Action Plan on Cooperation in Science and Technology for the period 2020-2024, as a reference document for guiding the cooperation within the Working Group in order to meet the objectives set by the BSEC Charter and new challenges and opportunities facing the Member States, and informed on the progress of its finalization. **The above document is attached as Annex VII.**

21. The Working Group took note of the updates provided by the ICBSS representative. Given the complexity of the document and in order to intensify the work on finalizing the text of the Action Plan, the Working Group reiterated its invitation to interested Member States to submit their written contributions /comments on the content of the draft of the Fourth Action

Plan directly to the ICBSS at their earliest convenience, preferably by 1 September 2021, so that the text of this document can be finalized and endorsed during the next Working Group meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 7: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE THIRD BSEC ACTION PLAN ON COOPERATION IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (CURRENTLY IN PLACE) - CONSIDERATION OF CONCRETE PROPOSALS AND PROJECTS

22. Within this Agenda Item, the following sub-items were considered:

a) Development of an open and interactive web-based Registry (database) of national innovation-related structures in BSEC Member States

23. The delegation of the Russian Federation presented the prototype of an open and interactive web-based registry (database) of research infrastructures (national innovation-related structures) in the BSEC Region and invited the Member States to provide 3-5 research and innovation related national infrastructures that could be included in the database (following the structure: title, keywords, website, email). The relevant presentation is attached as **Annex VIII**.

24. The representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt proposed to consider the possibility of including the BSEC Observers and Sectoral Dialogue Partners to the database.

25. The Working Group took note of the opinions of some Member States that would be considered before making the project public.

b) Black Sea Academic and Research Cooperation Facilitation Association

26. The Working Group took note of the information provided by the representative of the Russian Federation with regard to the BSAARC Initiative, in particular, its transformation into a non-profit organization – the Black Sea Academic and Research Cooperation Facilitation Association (BSAARC FA), aimed at the promotion of international multilateral cooperation in the field of science, innovation and education in the Black Sea Region. Ways of cooperation of the BSAARC Association with the BSEC Working Group on Cooperation in Science and Technology were further proposed by the delegation of the Russian Federation. The relevant presentation is attached as **Annex IX**.

27. Following the deliberations on the issue, the Working Group recommended to continue discussion on the issue at the next meeting of the Working Group.

c) Other project proposals

28. The Working Group took note of the presentation delivered by the representative of the Balkan and Black Sea Commission (BBSC) of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR), concerning the latest achievements on the “Cultural and Creative Regional Ecosystems” (CCRE-S3) thematic area and possible areas of cooperation with BSEC. The presentation is attached as **Annex X**.

29. As a first step that might later lead to the further cooperation within the activities of the Working Group, participants were invited to establish direct contact with the project

proponent or through BSEC PERMIS, for further discussion and coordination of possible joint efforts among the interested Member States.

AGENDA ITEM 8: YOUTH AND SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY – CONSIDERATION OF CONCRETE PROPOSALS

30. The participants underlined the importance of involving young people from the BSEC Member States in scientific, technological and innovative (STI) projects, as well as encouraging the exchange and mobility of researchers and scientists, especially among Youth, from the BSEC Member States.

31. The delegation of the Russian Federation reiterated the importance of establishing the BSEC Prize, and proposed to consider organization of the first Award ceremony and the workshop for young scientists online. The delegation of the Republic of Turkey (Country-Coordinator of the Working Group) expressed its support in the elaboration of the relevant concept note. The presentation “*The Black Sea Economic Cooperation Award (Prize) for Young Scientists*” is attached as **Annex XI**.

AGENDA ITEM 9: EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MEMORANDUM OF INTENT ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION BETWEEN BSEC AND USA

32. The Working Group took note of the information provided by BSEC PERMIS on the state of affairs with regard to the implementation of the Memorandum of Intent (MoI) on Science and Technology Cooperation between the BSEC Organization and the Government of the United States of America and invited the Member States to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the above MoI.

33. As a concrete outcome of the discussion, the Working Group proposed to consider the possibility of organizing a joint workshop/training on Science and Technology, as an initial step in the implementation of the above MoI. In this context, the competent authorities of the Member States were invited to submit to the PERMIS concrete proposals regarding the possible topic of a joint workshop/training on Science and Technology.

34. Following the deliberations on the issue, the Working Group decided to continue the consideration of this item at its next meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 10: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

35. The representative of the State of Israel expressed readiness to send a brief concept paper with their concrete proposals regarding possible ways of cooperation with the Working Group.

AGENDA ITEM 11: ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING

36. The Working Group adopted the Report of the Meeting to be submitted to the next Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials.