



ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Permanent International Secretariat

BS/WGC/R(2023)1

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE BSEC WORKING GROUP ON CULTURE

Videoconference, 28 March 2023

1. The Meeting of the BSEC Working Group on Culture was held online on 28 March 2023.
2. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Agil GUNASHOV, Head of International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan.
3. The Opening Remarks were made by:
 - Mr. Agil GUNASHOV, on behalf of the Country-Coordinator of the Working Group;
 - Ambassador Dimitrios RALLIS, Deputy Secretary General of BSEC PERMIS on behalf of the Secretariat.
4. Sincere condolences and sympathy to the Republic of Türkiye over the loss of life and large-scale destruction caused by the deadly earthquakes were expressed by the participants of the meeting. In this context, Ambassador Dimitrios RALLIS also informed that, as a token manifestation of solidarity, BSEC Organization, through PERMIS, made a donation of 50000 Euros from its Emergency Reserve Fund to the AFAD to support those affected by the earthquakes.
5. The Meeting was attended by the representatives of the following BSEC Member States:
 - Republic of Albania
 - Republic of Armenia
 - Republic of Azerbaijan
 - Republic of Bulgaria
 - Georgia
 - Hellenic Republic
 - Republic of Moldova
 - Romania
 - Russian Federation
 - Republic of Serbia
 - Republic of Türkiye
 - Ukraine

6. The following BSEC Related Bodies attended the Meeting:

Parliamentary Assembly of BSEC (PABSEC)
International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS)

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 is attached as **Annex I** to the present Report.

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 FOLLOW-UP OF THE DECLARATIONS AND JOINT STATEMENTS ADOPTED BY THE MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF CULTURE OF THE BSEC MEMBER STATES

10. Within this agenda item, the BSEC PERMIS informed on the developments with regard to the process of updating the “BSEC Economic Agenda”, the most important strategic document of the BSEC Organization, and welcomed the participation of the Member States in the development and drafting of the above document. Further involvement of interested parties in the relevant discussion was encouraged in order to improve the document.

11. The Working Group took note of information provided by the Secretariat on a special high level BSEC-ICBSS Session dedicated to “*Promoting Cultural Diplomacy in the wider Black Sea Region: the Role of Cultural Routes*” organized in the framework of the 11th Annual Advisory Forum on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe which took place on 5-7 October in Chania (Crete, Greece). The Session, organized in cooperation with the Greek cultural and tourism authorities and the EPA Secretariat on Cultural Routes, provided the most valuable mechanisms for the further promotion of the unique cultural heritage, diversity and multiculturalism of the BSEC region.

12. In addition, the Secretariat briefed on the fifth edition of the Workshop for Young Diplomats from the BSEC Member States on “*Developing cultural diplomacy in the Black Sea Region*”, jointly organized by the BSEC PERMIS and the Konrad-Adenauer Foundation, Türkiye, held on 21-23 March 2022 in Thessaloniki.

AGENDA ITEM 3: CONSIDERATION OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE PERIOD OF 1 JULY 2021 – 30 JUNE 2023 DEVELOPED BY THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN, THE CURRENT COUNTRY-COORDINATOR OF THE WORKING GROUP

13. The Working Group finalized the adoption of the Plan of Action of the Working Group on Culture for the period 1 July 2021 - 30 June 2023; the Plan, as amended, is attached as **Annex III**.

14. The Country-Coordinator called on BSEC Member States to join the “Peace4Culture” global campaign initiated by Azerbaijan with the support of UNAOC and ICESCO as well as to explore additional cooperation opportunities within the “Baku Process” and the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue organized in partnership with UNESCO, UNAOC, UNWTO, the Council of Europe and ICESCO.

AGENDA ITEM 4: 30 YEARS OF BSEC – LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PAST, VISION FOR THE FUTURE IN CULTURAL COOPERATION – CONSIDERATION OF CONCRETE PROPOSALS / PROJECTS THAT COULD BE IMPLEMENTED WITHIN THE WORKING GROUP

15. The participants had an extensive exchange of views on possible ways to further expand regional partnership and cooperation in this respect. In this context, the Working Group took note of the ideas and proposals expressed in the presentations and interventions under this agenda item and, recognizing the importance of the issue, agreed to continue and enhance its activities to better respond to the current requirements in the area of Culture.

16. The representative of the Republic of Armenia proposed a cultural exchange between the Member States by organizing joint calligraphic performances in partnership with respective Related Bodies.

17. The Working Group took note of the information provided by the representative of the Hellenic Republic on the initiative to promote culinary tradition and intangible heritage of the BSEC Member States by organized a gastronomy and wine festival, elaborated in cooperation with the BSEC PERMIS.

18. The presentation provided by the representative of the *International Centre for Black Sea Studies* (ICBSS) regarding the flagship activities carried out in the recent period is attached to the Report as **Annex IV**.

19. The delegation of Ukraine made a statement on the current situation in the country. It was followed by a statement of the representative of the Russian Federation. Both statements are attached to this Report as **Annex V** and **Annex VI** respectively.

AGENDA ITEM 5: EXHIBITIONS, FILM, THEATRE, OPERA AND BALLET FESTIVALS, INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIRS, CONFERENCES AND SIMILAR EVENTS – ENCOURAGING AND PROMOTING THE MUTUAL PARTICIPATION

20. Under this agenda item, the Member States were reminded to use the frame of their respective international festivals/exhibitions/fairs and similar events and to introduce, if applicable, a dedicated BSEC section as a good platform to promote the BSEC Region. This type of promotion would use the festival structure, as well as media coverage, to gain better visibility and further promote the Region. Accordingly, the relevant authorities of the BSEC Member States were invited to regularly inform the PERMIS in advance of similar events to be organized in their countries and whether this possibility actually exists.

AGENDA ITEM 6: COOPERATION WITH REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND PARTNERS

21. The representative of the PABSEC Secretariat informed on the past and forthcoming activities of the PABSEC Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee.

AGENDA ITEM 7: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

22. No discussion was held under this agenda item.

AGENDA ITEM 8: ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING

23. The Working Group on Culture adopted the present Report for its submission to the next Meeting of the BSEC Committee of Senior Officials.