



ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Permanent International Secretariat

15 April 2021

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REPORT OF THE EIGHTEENTH MEETING OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP OF EXPERTS ON BSEC-EU INTERACTION

15 April 2021
(*First half of the day, 10:30 -12:30 p.m.*)

1. The Eighteenth Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts on BSEC-EU Interaction was held online on 15 April 2021.
2. The Meeting was chaired by Ms. Antonela DHIMOLEA, Head of the Regional Initiative Unit of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania.
3. The Meeting was attended by the representatives of the following Member States:

Republic of Albania
Republic of Armenia
Republic of Azerbaijan
Republic of Bulgaria
Georgia
Hellenic Republic
Republic of Moldova
Republic of North Macedonia
Romania
Russian Federation
Republic of Serbia
Republic of Turkey
Ukraine
4. The representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC), the BSEC Business Council (BSEC BC) and the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) attended the Meeting as BSEC Related Bodies.

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5. The representatives of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Hungary, the Republic of Poland and the European External Action Service (on behalf of the European Commission) attended the Meeting as BSEC Observers, while Montenegro, Republic of Slovenia and the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) as a Sectoral Dialogue Partner.
6. The representative of the World Bank attended the meeting as a Guest.
7. The list of participants is attached as **Annex 1**.

AGENDA ITEM 1: ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

8. The Draft Agenda of the Meeting was discussed and adopted. The Agenda, as adopted, is attached as **Annex 2**.

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 HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT AND THE BSEC COUNCIL

9. The Ad Hoc Working Group took note of the information provided by the BSEC PERMIS on its participation in the 4th Meeting of the Senior Officials Working Group for the implementation of the Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) on 23 March 2021) and in the First Steering Group Meeting of 2021 on the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea (CMA) on 24 March 2021. The recently hosted national consultations with the CMA countries under the BBSEA GEF Regional Project were also touched upon.
10. The representative of the European External Action Service (EEAS) informed about recent developments in the Black Sea region, stressing upon the new financial grants and mechanism which are available to the BSEC Member States. The participants expressed their appreciation to the representative of EEAS Ms. Diana TASE for her dedication during the last four years to strengthen the BSEC-EU cooperation and wished her all the best on her future endeavors.
11. The delegation of the Russian Federation expressed the view that the BSEC PERMIS cooperation with the third parties should take place in a more transparent manner in strict accordance with the rules and norms existing within the Organization.
12. The participants exchanged views on recent developments on BSEC- EU interaction and on further promoting cooperation in a practical, balanced, mutually beneficial and project-oriented direction.

AGENDA ITEM 3: PARTICIPATION OF BSEC PERMIS IN CALLS FOR PROPOSALS (HORIZON 2020, EU GRANTS) AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE JOINT PROJECTS

13. The BSEC Council (Belgrade, 13 December 2016) instructed the BSEC PERMIS to proactively engage in the formulation of project proposals falling within BSEC objectives, fully respecting the prerogatives of the Member States, with the view to take advantage of the financing opportunities and procedures of European financial instruments.

14. In this framework, the BSEC PERMIS made an extensive power-point presentation covering all ongoing and future projects which are either managed by the Secretariat or in which PERMIS participates as an active contributor, as follows: “Black Sea CONNECT” project; Black Sea Virtual Knowledge Centre (BSVVC); “Blueing the Black Sea” GEF Regional project; direct grant from the DG NEAR; “BRIDGE” project. The presentation is attached as **Annex 3**.

15. The representative of the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) provided information on future joint projects and activities in cooperation with the BSEC Member States.

16. The representative of the Republic of Armenia stressed the importance of enhancing the participation of the non-littoral Member States in the preparation and implementation of the BSEC-EU joint projects.

17. The participants encouraged the BSEC PERMIS to continue proactively exploring the opportunities for securing EU’s financial assistance for BSEC projects, falling within the objectives of the Organization and fully respecting the prerogatives of the Member States.

AGENDA ITEM 4: UPDATING ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE (GEF) GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY “BLUEING THE BLACK SEA” REGIONAL PROJECT (BBSEA) BY THE WORLD BANK

18. The World Bank’s representative made an extensive presentation on the recent developments related to the implementation of the GEF “Blueing the Black Sea” Regional Project (BBSEA). The presentation is attached as **Annex 4**.

19. The participants expressed their appreciation for the detailed presentation made by the World Bank’s representative and exchanged views on this issue.

AGENDA ITEM 5: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

20. The representative of Ukraine informed the participants on the finalization of the ratification process of the new article 24 of the BSEC Charter.

AGENDA ITEM 6: DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

21. The date and venue of the next meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts on BSEC-EU Interaction will be communicated in due course.

AGENDA ITEM 7: ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING

22. The Ad Hoc Working Group adopted the present Report for submission to the Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials, to be held in June 2021.
