

ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Permanent International Secretariat

4 December 2024

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REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE BSEC WORKING GROUP ON TRADE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Online, 4 December 2024

1. The Meeting of the BSEC Working Group on Trade and Economic Development (WGTED) was held online on 4 December 2024.
2. The Meeting was chaired by Ms. Demet Işıl KARAKURT, Head of the Department of Regional Agreements and Dispute Settlement, Directorate General for International Agreements and EU Affairs, Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Türkiye.
3. The Meeting was attended by the representatives of the following BSEC Member States:
 - Republic of Armenia
 - Republic of Azerbaijan
 - Hellenic Republic
 - Republic of Moldova
 - Russian Federation
 - Republic of Türkiye
 - Ukraine
4. The List of Participants of the Meeting is attached as **Annex I**.
5. Opening remarks were made by:
 - Ms. Demet Işıl KARAKURT, on behalf of the Country-Coordinator of the BSEC Working Group on Trade and Economic Development;
 - Ambassador Dimitrios RALLIS, Deputy Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS.
6. The Draft Agenda of the Meeting was discussed, amended and adopted. The Agenda, as adopted, is attached as **Annex II**.

AGENDA ITEM 2: STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTIONS, DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS RELATED TO TRADE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE FOLLOW-UP OF THE JOINT DECLARATIONS ADOPTED BY THE MEETINGS OF THE MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF ECONOMY

7. The Working Group took note of the information provided by the BSEC PERMIS on the state of implementation of the relevant Resolutions, Decisions and Recommendations of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, as well as of the Joint Declarations adopted by the Ministers in charge of Economy of the BSEC Member States.

8. The delegation of the Russian Federation informed the Working Group on the country's ongoing efforts concerning agreements on the creation of free trade zones within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union. The information provided is attached as **Annex III**.

9. The delegation of the Republic of Türkiye informed the participants about the recent developments with regard to the country's preferential trade-related regional and bilateral initiatives since the last meeting of the Working Group. Urgent need for adoption of the Draft Regional Trade Facilitation Strategy for the BSEC region was also underlined. The information provided is attached as **Annex IV**.

AGENDA ITEM 3: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UPDATED BSEC ECONOMIC AGENDA “TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE OF THE WIDER BLACK SEA AREA”

10. The BSEC PERMIS informed the Working Group on the “*BSEC Economic Agenda: Towards a sustainable future of the wider Black Sea area*”, adopted by the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (BSEC Council) on 15 December 2023, the Decision on Implementation of the BSEC Economic Agenda, adopted by the BSEC Council on 28 June 2024, and the content of Goal 1 of the BSEC Economic Agenda (*Intensifying Intra-regional Trade and Investments*).

11. The Working Group agreed with the modalities of cooperation in the respective area in accordance with the provisions of the above-mentioned Goal.

AGENDA ITEM 4: CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT PLAN OF ACTION PREPARED BY THE COUNTRY-COORDINATOR OF THE WORKING GROUP ON TRADE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE) FOR THE PERIOD 1 JULY 2024 – 30 JUNE 2026

12. The Country-Coordinator (Republic of Türkiye) presented the draft Plan of Action of the Working Group for the period 1 July 2024 - 30 June 2026.

13. The Working Group considered, amended and approved the draft Plan of Action. The Plan of Action as adopted is attached as **Annex V**.

AGENDA ITEM 5: EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS OF ECONOMIC AND TRADE RELATIONS AMONG THE BSEC MEMBER STATES

14. The delegation of the Russian Federation informed the participants of the Meeting on the recent activities of the country with regard to encouragement of entrepreneurial activities, and outlined suggestions for future cooperation in the region. The information provided is attached as **Annex VI**.

15. The delegation of the Republic of Türkiye briefly informed the Working Group on recent developments achieved with regard to the economic growth of the country and its trade relations with the countries of the BSEC region.

AGENDA ITEM 6: COOPERATION AMONG THE BSEC MEMBER STATES IN THE SPHERE OF ELECTRONIC COMMERCE

16. The delegation of the Republic of Armenia informed the Working Group about recent legislative amendments related to cross-border e-commerce customs operations improvement, as well as existing system of simplified declarations for express shipments to facilitate the process of customs declaration. Brief information on initiation for minimising cross-border e-commerce threshold and amendments toward data collection from various stakeholders was also provided.

17. The Working Group further discussed the ways for implementation of the provisions of the “*Framework for BSEC E-commerce Cooperation*”, adopted by the BSEC Council in 2021.

- Preparation of the workshop on “Shaping regional cooperation in e-commerce: domestic experiences of the BSEC Member States”

18. BSEC PERMIS introduced a Concept Note, prepared by the latter, on organizing workshop on “*Shaping regional cooperation in e-commerce: domestic experiences of the BSEC Member States*”, attached as **Annex VII**.

19. The Working Group took note of the Concept Note, exchanged views on the ways to better organize the workshop, and invited interested Member States to send their further possible suggestions on the agenda, logistics and other pertinent details related to the organization of the workshop to the BSEC PERMIS **by 15 January 2025**.

20. The Working Group instructed the BSEC PERMIS to closely coordinate the matter with the Country-Coordinator and forthcoming BSEC Chairmanships-in-Office, taking into account also the views of the Member States so far expressed and their possible suggestions to be sent to the Secretariat by the above deadline, with a view to organize the above mentioned workshop in 2025.

AGENDA ITEM 7: SETTING UP AN INFORMATION EXCHANGE MECHANISM ON TRADE AND ECONOMIC ISSUES IN THE BSEC REGION

21. The Working Group considered the Project Proposal on “*Setting up an Information Exchange Mechanism on trade and economic issues in the BSEC Region*”, and reiterated its invitation to the Member States to send their feedback on it **by 15 January 2025**.

22. The Working Group instructed the BSEC PERMIS to examine possible ways to further elaborate the project proposal, based on the feedback to be received from the Member States, and prepare, in coordination with the Country-Coordinator of the Working Group, and present its updated text at the next meeting of the Working Group.

23. The Project Proposal is attached as **Annex VIII**.

AGENDA ITEM 8: EXPERIENCE SHARING IN RELATION TO THE NATIONAL TRADE FACILITATION COMMITTEES OF THE MEMBER STATES

24. The delegations of the Republic of Armenia, the Hellenic Republic, the Republic of Moldova and the Republic of Türkiye informed the Working Group on the state of affairs with regard to the mechanisms established in their respective countries for supervising the implementation of the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO TFA). Information provided by the delegation of the Republic of Türkiye is attached as **Annex IX**.

25. In this context, the representative of the Republic of Armenia further mentioned that according to Article 23.2 of WTO TFA, each Member shall establish a National Committee on Trade Facilitation or designate an existing mechanism to facilitate both domestic coordination and implementation of the provisions of the Agreement, although Armenia does not currently maintain a NCTF, the country has other mechanisms at place to ensure TFA implementation. It was highlighted that, as of 2024, more than 94% of TFA provisions have been implemented in Armenia. Since TFA implementation and monitoring are considered to be continuous and need permanent improvement, initiation of the establishment of a NCTF in the country was also mentioned.

26. The Working Group decided to continue exchange of information and views on the Agenda Item at its next Meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 9: REGIONAL COOPERATION IN SUPPORT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

27. The delegation of the Russian Federation provided the Working Group with information on the developments in the respective country with regard to combating global climate change. The information as provided is attached as **Annex X**.

AGENDA ITEM 10: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

28. No issue was raised under this Agenda Item.

AGENDA ITEM 11: ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING

29. The Working Group adopted the Report for its submission to the Committee of Senior Officials and the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs for their consideration.