

News from the Black Sea

Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation

Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS)

BSEC



Dear readers,

We are back with our news from the Black Sea region after a long summer break. We hope you enjoyed your holidays and are ready to successfully face the new working period.

Dear readers, though it was a break for us, unfortunately the wild-fires did not take one. Vast areas of woodlands, in other words our oxygen reserves, our biosphere within the Eurasian region, the Amazons, as well as in other parts of our planet were destroyed, surrendering to man-provoked fires and escalating climate change consequences. We as BSEC PERMIS, decided not to remain silent on this matter, but to start the 10th issue of our Newsletter with a short reference to a matter that concerns us all very much: *Climate Change* and its dire consequences.

As the Secretary General of BSEC PERMIS, I had the opportunity and privilege to attend the “*United Nations Climate Action Summit 2019*” that took place in New York.

“*How dare you*” were the words that marked the Summit: it took a young Swedish activist of only 16 years, Greta Thunberg, to initiate a massive awareness on the social media and organize the worldwide “*Climate Change Strike*” that united as one, hundreds of thousands of strikers. It is a teenager that reminded us how critical the situation is. These actions made us think once again that it is high time, dear readers, to listen to the young generation and come up urgently with solutions that will slow down the, probably, irreversible destruction of our planet. After all, we should not forget that the overall prosperity of our planet is directly linked to its environmental well-being and we owe the future generations a better world.

We as BSEC PERMIS, do our utmost to persuade our Member States to take urgent actions through the BSEC ad hoc groups of experts, such as those on “*Massive Forest Fires*” and “*Floods and Torrents*”. We are aware that we need more involvement and faster response before it is too late.

In this issue of our Newsletter, besides environmental issues, climate change and the UN SDGs, readers will find other information concerning the recent activities of our Organization. We wish you a pleasant reading.

Ambassador Michael B. Christides
Secretary General (BSEC PERMIS)

INFORMAL MEETING OF THE BSEC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

(New York, 26 September 2019)



The Hellenic BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office hosted on the 26th September 2019 in New York an Informal Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States.

The open and frank discussion focused on ensuring broader participation of experts from Member States in the meetings of the BSEC Working Groups; on the replenishment of the *Project Development Fund* (PDF) and on issues concerning the rotation of the BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office.

The overall appreciation of the participating Ministers and Heads of Delegation was that, despite some of its shortcomings which have to be addressed, the BSEC Organization has developed into a trusted, sought-after interlocutor and partner on the regional and international scene.

THE 23rd SESSION OF THE UNWTO GENERAL ASSEMBLY

(St. Petersburg 10-13 September 2019)



BSEC PERMIS was among the more than 1,300 participants that attended the most important high-level meeting for the global tourism sector - the *23rd Session of the UNWTO General Assembly*, hosted in St.Petersburg. The main focus of this prestigious event was on how to make global tourism more sustainable and accessible, as well as enhance its role as a key driver of growth and employment through the embrace of entrepreneurship, innovation and education.

The rich program of the event included many diverse and interesting items concerning the activities of the UNWTO and its plans for the immediate future. Secretary General, Ambassador Michael B. Christides, followed on behalf of BSEC PERMIS, all plenary sessions of the Assembly and had the opportunity to discuss issues of common interest mainly with the Heads of Delegations from the BSEC Member States, as well as briefly with the UNWTO Secretary General, Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili.

On the sidelines of the Meeting, Ambassador Christides had a working meeting with the responsible representatives of the UNWTO on the many issues concerning the agenda of cooperation between the two Organizations. Both sides expressed their satisfaction with the development of their cooperation, reflected in many joint efforts and initiatives. They agreed that by implementing the renewed Memorandum of Understanding between the two entities, BSEC PERMIS will continue functioning as the “regional partner” of the UNWTO, amplifying the latter’s voice and effectiveness in the geostrategic wider Black Sea region.

For more information: [Press Release](#)

BSEC remains in the scope of interest of civil society and business organizations.

A delegation of the “Independent Industrialists’ and Businessmen’s Association” (MÜSİAD) of Turkey, paid a visit to the BSEC PERMIS headquarters in Istanbul on the 3rd of October 2019 to discuss and exchange views on the possible ways of cooperation and interaction between the BSEC PERMIS and MÜSİAD in specific areas of common interest, in particular in renewable energy, tourism and information technologies, with a view of organizing joint events and undertaking specific initiatives for promoting the common objectives of both organizations.

MÜSİAD is an active non-governmental organization created for the purpose of contributing to the social, cultural, political, economic, scientific and technological development of individuals and institutions.



10th Meeting of the Blue Growth Initiative for Research and Innovation in the Black Sea and the European Research and Innovation Days.

BSEC PERMIS was represented by its Executive Manager, Ms. Rositsa Stoeva, at the two events organized by the European Commission, Directorate General for Research and Innovation and held in Brussels, on 24-27 September 2019.

The European Research and Innovation Days (24-26 September) took place for the first time as a policy event of the European Commission, bringing together different stakeholders to debate and shape the future research and innovation landscape.

The main goal of the organizers was to engage stakeholders to jointly create and build the strategic priorities for the first four years of the *Horizon Europe* program, which will start operating in 2021 and is the successor to the current research and innovation framework program, Horizon 2020.





Cultural tourism plays a central role in connecting people, promoting intercultural dialog and spreading awareness and knowledge of the importance of cultural diversity. This was one of the highlights of the 2019 edition of the Advisory Forum where BSEC PERMIS was represented by its Executive Manager, Ms. Sandra Vujinovic.

The Forum was attended by representatives of the 47 Member States of the Council of Europe, representatives from the 38 certified Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe and candidate Cultural Routes, International Organizations, including EU, UNWTO, UNESCO, local and regional authorities, together with academics, business stakeholders and experts from the culture and tourism from around the Europe.

The program of the three day Forum included five plenary sessions reflecting different aspects of cultural tourism and cultural routes.

Taking into consideration that approximately 40% of international tourist arrivals are considered cultural tourists, the role of the Cultural Routes in harnessing the potential for cultural tourism to strengthen European heritage and traditions, as well as foster innovation and creativity in the cultural sector in favor of the tourist experience were also among the major subjects discussed during the Forum.

On the sidelines of the Forum, Ms. Vujinovic had several bilateral talks with various interlocutors concerning possible cooperation and asked for their support in realizing the intention of BSEC PERMIS to promote the establishment of “Cultural Routes” in the wider Black Sea region; further, she invited them to participate in the forthcoming Joint Meeting of the BSEC WGs on Culture and on Cooperation in Tourism, to be held on 26 November 2019, in view of the fact that, among other topics, cultural routes / cultural tourism projects will be also discussed.

Technology connects us, unites us and strengthens our power.

On the margins of the **23rd World Congress on Information Technology (WCIT)** (Yerevan, 6-9 October 2019), a High Level side event under the title "*Harnessing the Power of Technology for Impact: BSEC Perspective on Regional Collaboration*" was co-organized by the Republic of Armenia (as the Country-Coordinator of the BSEC Working Group on ICT) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

Senior government officials of the BSEC Member States, representatives from the private sector, from educational and research institutions, as well as from other interested entities discussed how to bring innovative technology to serve public policy making for greater impact and leverage collective expertise for systemic change and development solutions which can be replicated across the BSEC region and beyond.

During the event, the Secretary General of BSEC PERMIS, Ambassador Michael B. Christides, briefed participants on the achievements of BSEC in ICT, underlining the need to do more, informed on the project proposal entitled "Data-Driven IT Solutions for SMEs" which is being financed by the BSPPF, stressed the ability and capacity of the BSEC Organization to become a platform for achieving a greater coordination and exchange of know-how in the IT sector and suggested to have BSEC ICT experts present in the Meetings of other BSEC Working Groups, in order to guide and inform the latter on the newest solutions and advantages that IT and innovation could offer.

For more information: [Press Release](#)



International Conference on Energy and Climate Change

(Athens, 9-11 October 2019)

We should act with greater speed for decarbonizing the energy sector and for implementing the targets of the Paris Agreement!

This was the generally shared view at the Forum, held on the first day of the 12th Annual International Scientific Conference on “Energy and Climate Change”, initiated in 2008 under the auspices of BSEC by the *Energy Policy and Development Centre (KEPA)* of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

In his message the PERMIS Secretary General underlined BSEC concerns on Climate Change and its dire consequences. BSEC PERMIS representatives taking part in the Forum had the chance to inform participants

on the activities of BSEC related bodies for the expansion of regional cooperation in Green Energy.

All participants shared the view that the green transformation of the economies had to be intensified and that the BSEC Member States should act with greater speed for decarbonizing their energy sector and for implementing the targets of the Paris Agreement. For doing so a favourable administrative and legal framework for investments in climate change should be established; last but not least, Member States should make greater use of BSEC and of its “BSEC Green Energy Network” for joint and coordinated action in these directions.

For more information: [Press Release](#)



Can used fishing-nets turn into items such as picnic tables, benches, even clothes? The answer is yes! Turning old nets into raw material is not only a brilliant idea of waste management, but also helps us preserve our environment and protect marine faunae as the discarded fishing-nets will not end up in the oceans!

Towards this goal BSEC is preparing to cooperate with “Plastics-Europe”, the Turkish “National Packaging Waste Recycling Enterprise” (PAGEV) and the Municipality of Sariyer, Istanbul.

For more information: [Press Release](#)



DEPARTMENT OF
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



In a region that lags behind in the implementation of the UN SDGs, PERMIS is spearheading efforts together with the Romanian Government and the Black Sea Universities Network (BSUN) to catch up on this regard.

The International Conference on “*Implementation of the UN 2030 SDGs in the Black Sea Region*”, organized by the Department of Sustainable Development of the Romanian Government, in collaboration with the *Black Sea Universities Network (BSUN)*, BSEC PERMIS and the Black Sea Chapter of the *Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)*, was held in Bucharest on 4-5 October 2019. The Conference, attended by over 90 participants, was conceived as a platform for free debates among governmental agencies, universities, research and development institutions and NGOs, in order to identify directions and policies to be followed for the effective implementation of SDGs in the Black Sea area.

The importance of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (*SDSN Black Sea*), as well as the need for a more determined action at the level of governments, both nationally and regionally, were also stressed; making effective use of the cooperation framework of BSEC and of the potential of BSUN in this regard can only enhance further the above efforts. The establishment at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki of an Observatory for collecting and managing relevant data in the Black Sea, envisaged to be financed by the *Black Sea Project Promotion Facility (BSPPF)*, was also discussed in this respect.

For more information: [Press Release](#)

Young diplomats connecting through BSEC.



The second edition of the Workshop for Young Diplomats from the BSEC Member States on “The role of Economic Diplomacy today”, jointly organized by BSEC PERMIS and the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation, Turkey (KAS), was held on 23th - 25th October 2019 in Istanbul.

The Workshop, which was attended by 21 young diplomats from the twelve BSEC Member States, provided an excellent opportunity to emphasize the importance of regional cooperation among the future foreign policy decision-makers in the Black Sea area, while it helped participants to meet with their counterparts from other BSEC Member States.

Representatives from BSEC PERMIS and KAS, as well as other eminent personalities from the region and beyond attended the Workshop as speakers. In their speeches, they underlined the importance of similar events, which should be evaluated as a precious “investment” for the future and stated that the Workshop has already proven to be a valuable vehicle promoting the spirit of friendship and good neighborliness between young diplomats from the BSEC Member States.

During the Workshop a simulation game on “How to effectively promote the economic cooperation in the Black Sea Area” took place in the BSEC Headquarters. It was conceived as an educational simulation and aimed at introducing the participants to the objectives, procedures and functioning of the BSEC Organization, while, at the same time, familiarizing them with some of the most topical issues of regional cooperation related to transports in the Black Sea area.

For more information: [Press Release](#)

SOME EVENTS COMING UP IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

- Meeting of the Working Group on Transport (BSEC Headquarters, 12 November 2019)
- Joint Meeting of the Working Groups on Culture and on Cooperation in Tourism (BSEC Headquarters, 26 November 2019)
- Working Group on Energy (BSEC Headquarters, 29 November 2019)
- 41st Meeting of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (Athens, 13 December 2019)



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