

News from the Black Sea

Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation

Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS)



PERMANENT INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT (PERMIS)



Dear Readers,

We have the pleasure to share herewith the first issue of our newsletter for year 2026, covering the months of January to March.

We started the year with Georgia as Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC, for the first semester until 30 June 2026. We use this opportunity to reiterate our wishes of success as well as our commitment to work closely under their valuable guidance towards further promoting the objectives of our Organization.

The priorities and calendar of events of the Georgian Chairmanship of BSEC are available on the following links respectively: <https://www.bsec-organization.org/chairmanship> and <https://www.bsec-organization.org/Events/Archive/2026>

Dear Readers,

During the period covered by this issue of the Newsletter, a series of activities and meetings took place: the Coordination Meeting of the Georgian Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC with the BSEC Committee of Senior Officials, BSEC Related Bodies and BSEC PERMIS, working visit to Tbilisi, BSEC-BSTDB high-level meeting, 88th Session of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee (ITC), as well as other events that you may read about in our Newsletter.

On 8 March, we celebrated the International Women's Day and honored the power of Women, their courage and achievements, as well as their commitment to overcome violence and discrimination. In this framework, a Webinar entitled "Women Diplomats at the Forefront: Promoting Dialogue and Development in the Black Sea" was held on 9 March 2026.

Dear Readers,

Serious challenges, including wars, unfortunately, continue to affect our region and our neighborhood as well. These wars which heavily impact the global economy, need to be urgently ended and peace be brought back.

Dear Readers,

To conclude, we hope you will enjoy reading the “News from the Black Sea”. And don’t forget to stay tuned with us via BSEC website and social media accounts!

***Ambassador Lazar Comanescu
Secretary General***

HEADLINES

- **In the spotlight**
- **Working and courtesy visits**
- **BSEC Working Groups/Steering Committees**
- **Key events**
- **Other events**

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Coordination Meeting of the Georgian Chairmanship-in-Office (CiO)



The Coordination Meeting of the Georgian Chairmanship-in-Office (CiO) of BSEC with the BSEC Committee of Senior Officials, BSEC Related Bodies and BSEC PERMIS took place online on 2 February 2026.

Mr. Archil Karaulashvili, Director of the Directorate for Security Policy, International Organizations, and Euro-Atlantic Integration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, chaired the Meeting and presented the Priorities of the Chairmanship-in-Office as follows:

- Strengthening Regional Connectivity and Supporting the Middle Corridor;
- Advancing Energy Security and Developing the Green Energy Corridor;
- Revitalizing Tourism and Fostering Cultural Cooperation;
- Advancing Digitalization and Good Governance.

For the full text of these priorities please visit:

<https://www.bsec-organization.org/chairmanship>

The calendar of events was also discussed and approved as in the below link:

<https://www.bsec-organization.org/events/eventType/Upcoming>

WORKING AND COURTESY VISITS



BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu paid a working visit to Tbilisi on 28-30 January 2026 within the framework of the Georgian Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC, covering the period from 1 January to 30 June 2026.

He had meetings with H.E. Irakli Kobakhidze, Prime Minister of Georgia; H.E. Shalva Papuashvili, Chairman of the Parliament; H.E. Maka Botchorishvili, Minister of Foreign Affairs. He also held talks with Deputy Foreign Minister, Alexander Khvtisiashvili and Deputy Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development, Genadi Arveladze.

During these meetings the current developments in the Black Sea region and within BSEC were discussed, with particular focus on the program of work, objectives and activities of the Organization under the Georgian Chairmanship of BSEC.



Courtesy visit by First Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dr. Merve Safa Kavakçı to Mr. Davut Gül, Governor of Istanbul (14 January 2026)



Courtesy visit by Ambassador Vassilis Maragos, Head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Armenia (BSEC Headquarters, 19 January 2026)



Visit by Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Secretary General of the Developing-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation (D-8) (BSEC Headquarters, 21 January 2026)



Visit by Mr. Hüseyin Coşkun, Deputy Mayor of Sarıyer (BSEC Headquarters, 22 January 2026)



Courtesy visit by Mr. Alexander Kalachev, Consul General of the Russian Federation in Istanbul (BSEC Headquarters, 23 January 2026)



Working visit by Mr. Mehmet Uylukçu, Secretary General of BSEC-URTA (BSEC Headquarters, 3 February 2026)



Working visit by Dr. Akkan Suver, Chairman of the Marmara Group Foundation (BSEC Headquarters, 6 February 2026)



Courtesy visit by H.E. Wael Ibrahim Ali Badawi el Sheikh, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Ankara (BSEC Headquarters, 3 March 2026)



Working visit by Mr. Haris Theoharis, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic (BSEC Headquarters, 16 March 2026)

BSEC WORKING GROUPS/STEERING COMMITTEES

Throughout the period covered by this Newsletter, BSEC PERMIS held the Steering Committee of the Project Development Fund. Information regarding the implementation of the PDF Projects was provided during the Committee.

KEY EVENTS

UNECE Inland Transport Committee (ITC)



The 88th Session of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee (ITC) took place in Geneva on 17-20 February 2026. The High-Level Ministerial Meeting was dedicated to the theme “Driving Innovation for the Future of Inland Transport” with the debates being organized in three successive panels.

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu attended and addressed the panel dedicated to “Connectivity, mobility and trade”, and highlighted that in today’s interconnected world digitalization has become a necessity in the transport sector and is crucial for securing better connectivity and integration of regions. He also underlined that implementing innovative transport solutions and intelligent transport systems which facilitate the flow of goods and passengers across borders are among the key priorities of the updated BSEC Economic Agenda.

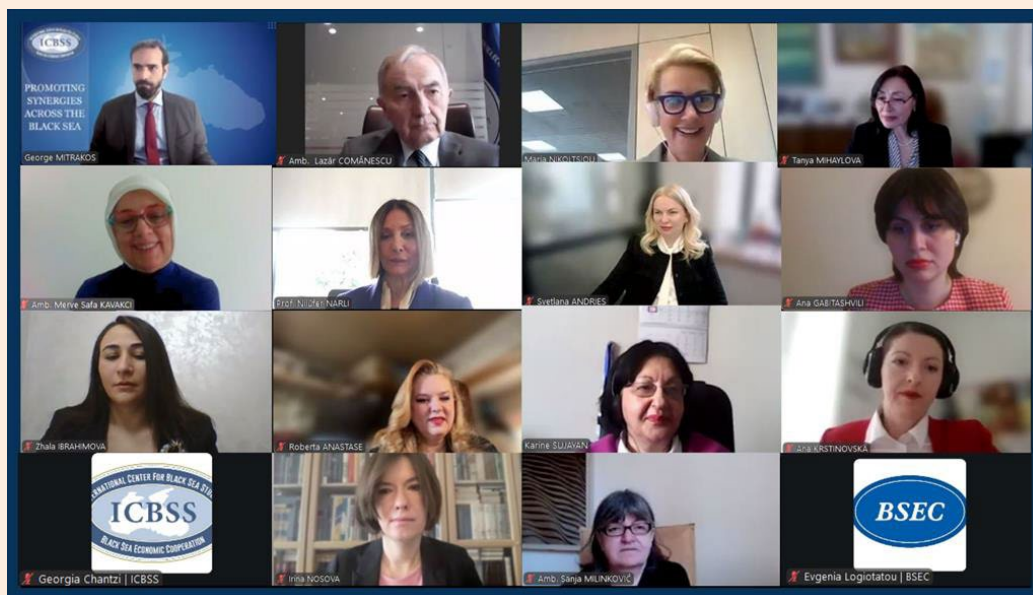
BSEC-BSTDB high-level meeting

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu paid a working visit to Dr. Serhat Köksal, President of the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB) in Thessaloniki, on 24 February 2026. A high-level meeting took place on this occasion, with the participation of BSEC PERMIS Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dimitrios Rallis, Executive Manager Mr. Kenan Murtuzov, as well as BSTDB representatives. The discussions focused on ways to further enhance the BSEC-BSTDB cooperation and coordination aimed at

promoting sustainable economic development in the Black Sea region, in line with the BSEC Economic Agenda.



Webinar “Women Diplomats at the Forefront”



A webinar entitled “Women Diplomats at the Forefront: Promoting Dialogue and Development in the Black Sea” was held on 9 March 2026 on the occasion of the International Women’s Day. The Webinar brought together representatives of international organizations, experts and academics from BSEC Member States and partner institutions. Discussions focused on the contribution of women to dialogue, peace and cooperation in the wider Black Sea region, the impact of increased gender balance in diplomatic services, as well as progress achieved in women’s empowerment and gender equality.

Global Baku Forum



The 13th edition of the Global Baku Forum took place in Baku, on 12-14 March 2026. This year's generic topic was “Bridging Divides in a World in Transition”, with debates organized in 12 successive thematic panels covering issues such as global security and balance of power, the state of multilateralism and global

cooperation, economic growth, energy dependency and clean-energy infrastructure, connectivity/digital connectivity, information control, critical supply routes, etc.

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu was a panelist in the Panel “Middle Corridor and Eurasian Connection Gateway”. In his remarks, he highlighted the importance of a secure, sustainable and climate resilient connectivity and stressed in this context, the need of coordination and correlation among regional organizations to accelerate sustainable and resilient infrastructure projects. He further underlined the importance of the Black Sea region as a key connectivity hub and said that, big connectivity initiatives/projects such as Middle Corridor can't bypass the region.

OTHER EVENTS

International Ayder Energy Forum

The International Ayder Energy Forum was held in Ayder (Republic of Türkiye) on 14-16 January 2026.



The Forum focused on the theme "Energy - Global Security and Diplomacy", and the participants held discussions on energy supply security, the role of the Black Sea region in global energy dynamics, the interaction between energy policy and artificial intelligence, sustainable development and low/zero-carbon solutions and strategic energy competition in the Black Sea and Eurasia.

In his contribution to the debate, BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Comanescu dwelled on the importance of the Black Sea region both in terms of energy resources and as a strategic supply and transport hub. He further stressed that there is need of resolute action to prevent threats to and disruption of transport infrastructure and routes, respectively of energy markets and global supply chains.

ET NOW Times Group Global Business Summit

The 10th edition of the ET NOW Times Group Global Business Summit (GBS2026) was held in New Delhi on February 13–14 February 2026, under the theme Decade of Disruption, Century of Change.

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu, invited as a guest of honor joined the session "Trade, Tariffs and Global Growth." He stressed the need for resilient interdependencies in the digital era while cautioning that tariffs may not be a long-term solution. He highlighted the Black Sea region's strategic role as a hub linking Europe and Asia, underscoring its importance for global connectivity initiatives.





CEI 30th Anniversary (Trieste, 17 March 2026)

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu attended the Conference on the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of the Executive Secretariat of the Central European Initiative (CEI) held in Trieste on 17 March 2026.

Black Sea Security Conference

The Third Black Sea Security Conference was held in Chisinau on 23 March 2026.

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu attended the Conference and addressed the participants both in the opening session and as panelist. He emphasized on the urgent need of bringing peace back in the Black Sea region, and highlighted the importance of regional economic cooperation in providing long-term security. He referred in this context to the need of coordinated efforts aimed at securing safe trade, energy and supply routes.



Blueing the Black Sea (BBSEA) project

The Regional Steering Committee (RSC) of the Blueing the Black Sea (BBSEA) project was held at the BSEC Headquarters on 24 March 2026.

Progress so far achieved as well as actions to be taken were presented during the Meeting, followed by discussions on Component 1 of the project: National Policy Framework and Investment Recommendations.



The Black Sea Blue Economy Summit

The Black Sea Blue Economy Summit was held in Trabzon on 25 -31 March 2026. It consisted of topics under blue economy such as regional cooperation and sustainable blue economy, role of E-commerce, cruise tourism, projects and policies conducted by international organizations, etc.

BSEC PERMIS was represented by First Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dr. Merve Safa Kavakçı, who made a presentation under the session “Regional Cooperation and Sustainable Blue Economy: Shared Vision, Shared Future, Security”. In her presentation she briefed the audience on the activities and projects of BSEC Organization. She also touched upon environmental degradation and marine pollution; climate change impacts, etc., and underlined the active role of BSEC in

promoting a balanced approach that integrates economic development with the protection of marine ecosystems.

On the sidelines of the Summit, Ambassador Kavakçı, paid a courtesy visit to the Rector of the Black Sea Technical University Professor Dr. Hamdullah Çuvalcı.



Economist Romania Government Roundtable

The Economist Romania Government Roundtable held in Bucharest on 30 March – 1 April 2026. The Roundtable provided a global platform to analyze the global geopolitical and business issues such as security and foreign policy, energy security and transition, technology and innovation, investment and growth, transport and infrastructure, as well as sustainability and finance.

As guest of honor and keynote speaker, BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu addressed the session on geopolitical developments and strategic priorities in a shifting region. In his address, he highlighted BSEC Organization’s role in regional cooperation.





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