

News from the Black Sea

Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation

Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS)



Message of the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu.

Dear Readers,

We have come to the end of yet another year. Definitely 2022 was a challenging year, since while we were on the path of slow recovery from the pandemic much to our regret, we witnessed grave developments in the Black Sea Region which did not bode well with the Organization's objectives.

2022 was also the year of the 30th Anniversary of BSEC which was founded in 1992 with the objective of promoting regional economic cooperation as well as peace, stability and prosperity in the wider Black Sea area.

A series of activities were envisaged to mark this Anniversary, but due to the developments I referred to, could unfortunately only partially be realized. It deserves however to highlight that though faced with geopolitical tensions present throughout its 30 years of existence, BSEC stood strong and contributed significantly to the well-being of our region and will continue to do so in the years to come.

Dear Readers,

You will observe in this issue of the “News from the Black Sea” that under the able guidance of the Moldovan Chairmanship-in-Office of the BSEC and with the support of our Member States, the BSEC PERMIS continued during this difficult and demanding period, to fulfill its functions and responsibilities as well as to represent the Organization in various fora. Also, several joint projects were accomplished, while new ones were launched.

As we bid farewell to 2022, we also say goodbye to the BSEC PERMIS First Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Ebru Barutçu Gökdenizler. We thank her for her most valuable contributions to the work of the PERMIS during her three-year tenure. We also bid farewell to Dr. Sergei Goncharenko, Deputy Secretary General, and thank him for his contributions during two successive terms. We wish them both all the best in their future endeavors.

Dear Readers,

While hoping you will enjoy the read, I wish to seize this opportunity to extend all best wishes for the holiday season and wish you all a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year. We hope that peace will soon be restored and good neighborly relations will prevail in the Black Sea Region.

Ambassador Lazar Comanescu

HEADLINES

- **45th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (CMFA)**
- **Working and courtesy visits**
- **16th Coordination Meeting of Regional Organizations**
- **Other events and meetings organized and attended by the BSEC PERMIS**
- **School students visit**
- **Farewell lunch**

45th CMFA

The Forty-fifth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (CMFA) of the BSEC Member States was held online on 21 December 2022 under the Chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Nicu Popescu, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova.

In addition to the Heads of Delegations of the BSEC Member States, representatives of the BSEC Related Bodies, Observers and Sectoral Dialogue Partners also participated in the Council Meeting.

At the opening, the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu presented a brief overview of the activities and achievements of the Secretariat during the Moldovan Chairmanship which coincided with the 30th Anniversary of the BSEC.

The Ministers made statements on issues regarding the latest developments in the region and within the Organization. They praised the Moldovan Chairmanship and expressed their appreciation to the Latter for extending their BSEC Chairmanship to cover the entire year.

At the closing session, the Council adopted Resolutions, Decisions and Recommendations on various issues on the agenda of the Organization: including succession of the Chairmanship in Office; adoption of the 2023 BSEC Budget, renewal of Sectoral Dialogue Partnership Status in BSEC; appointment of country coordinators to working groups; the interaction between BSEC and its Related Bodies; as well as the appointment of the First Deputy Secretary General.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Republic of Moldova handed over the Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC to the Republic of Serbia which assumes the Chairmanship as of 1 January 2023, for a period of six months until 30 June 2023.

WORKING AND COURTESY VISITS

The BSEC PERMIS received several visitors during the period covered by this edition.

Visit by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director for EU Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, H.E. Ambassador Faruk Kaymakçı.



H.E. Ambassador Faruk Kaymakçı paid a visit to the Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu at the BSEC PERMIS on 11 November 2022. The Secretary General and the Deputy Minister exchanged views on issues on the agenda of the Organization as well as current developments in the BSEC region. During his visit, Deputy Minister Kaymakçı presented as a gift to the PERMIS a framed commemorative postage stamp issued by the Turkish Post Office (PTT) to honor the 30th Anniversary of the foundation of BSEC.

Visit by the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of the Republic of North Macedonia, Mr. Abdylshyqyr Abedini.

The Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of the Republic of North Macedonia, Mr. Abdylshyqyr Abedini paid a visit to the BSEC PERMIS on 8 December 2022.

During the meeting, Deputy Minister Abedini informed on the strategies and policies of the Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy and expressed their interest in closer cooperation with the BSEC in the field of agriculture, including the programs released to food and security. The BSEC PERMIS Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Rallis informed his interlocutor on the activities of BSEC in the field of agriculture and on work for establishment of

the BSEC Regional Cooperation Centre for Sustainable Food Systems in close cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).



Visit by the President of the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB), Dr. Serhat Köksal, 24 November 2022.



Visit by the Head of the Turkish Office of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS), Mr. Walter Glos, 25 November 2022.



16th Coordination Meeting of Regional Organizations

The BSEC PERMIS hosted on 8 December 2022, the 16th Coordination Meeting of Regional Organizations attended by the representatives of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative (AII), the Central European Initiative (CEI) and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

The overall objective of the meeting was to

stimulate and facilitate discussions on activities in promoting regional dialogue and cooperation, as well as strengthening the project-oriented capacity of the regional organizations in areas of common interest.

Among the topics discussed were activities related to connectivity, climate change, environmental protection, UN SDGs and the results of COP27, as well as project development and implementation.



OTHER EVENTS AND MEETINGS ORGANIZED AND ATTENDED BY THE BSEC PERMIS

BSEC WORKING GROUPS

During the period covered by this Newsletter the BSEC PERMIS also held a number of Working Group meetings covering such areas as Budgetary and Financial Issues, Customs Matters, Energy, Environmental Protection, Institutional Renewal and Good Governance, Working Group on Exchange of Statistical Data and Economic Information, and Trade and Economic Development.

For more events during the Moldovan Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC please visit:

<http://www.bsec-organization.org/events>

CULTURE

11th Annual Advisory Forum on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe



A special high level BSEC-ICBSS Session dedicated to “Promoting Cultural Diplomacy in the wider Black Sea Region: the Role of Cultural Routes” was held in the framework of the 11th Annual Advisory Forum on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe which took place on 5-7 October 2022 in Chania.

The Session offered an opportunity to highlight the relevance of the cultural values of the BSEC area and of the role cultural diplomacy has in promoting those values and better understanding of BSEC Region and its cultural identity. Possibilities and modalities of how the cultural capitals of the Black Sea region can best be promoted were discussed in this context.

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated in the session as keynote speaker and made a presentation on the BSEC activities with particular emphasis on the initiatives related to cultural diplomacy, respectively to the promotion of the unique cultural heritage, diversity and multiculturalism of the BSEC region.

On the margin of the Forum, the Secretary General also had bilateral meetings with Mrs. Lina Mendoni, Minister of Culture and Sports of the Hellenic Republic, and Mr. Stefano Dominioni, Executive Secretary of the EPA on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.

ENERGY

9th Green Energy Investments Forum

The 9th Green Energy Investments Forum was held within the framework of the 15th International Scientific Conference on Energy and Climate Change on 12-14 October 2022 in Athens. The BSEC PERMIS was represented at the Forum by the Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu and Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dimitrios Rallis.

Ambassador Comanescu in his statement at the Forum highlighted the importance BSEC attaches to investments in green energy, energy efficiency, and diversification of energy sources and transformation of the BSEC region into a model for clean energy. He praised BSEC's cooperation with the KEPA NKUA and the BSEC-GEN for the formulation of concrete projects of regional scope. The Forum focused on policy making, perspectives of green investments in BSEC Member States, climate change, environment and energy, as well as brokerage, innovation and start-ups.



ENVIRONMENTAL/MARITIME ISSUES

1st High-Tech Summit for the Black Sea and the BRIDGE-BS General Assembly

The 1st High-Tech Summit for the Black Sea and the BRIDGE-BS General Assembly took place in Varna on 27-29 September 2022.

As partner of the "BRIDGE-BS: Advancing Black Sea Research and Innovation to CoDevelop Blue Growth within Resilient Ecosystems" project consortium, the BSEC PERMIS participated in both events represented by Executive Manager Ms. Rositsa Stoeva, with a joint stand with the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) at the Summit, where dedicated workshops for practitioners and matchmaking sessions also took place.

BRIDGE-BS General Assembly was held back-to-back with the High-Tech Summit and was dedicated to taking stock of the first year of the project's implementation stage.



Detailed information about the meetings, as well as the project itself can be found at <http://bridgeblacksea.org/>



Annual Meeting of the "Large scale RESToration of COASTal ecosystems through rivers to sea connectivity - REST-COAST"

The Annual Meeting of the "Large scale RESToration of COASTal ecosystems through rivers to sea connectivity - REST-COAST" project took place on 18-21 October 2022 in Venice.

As partner of the "REST-COAST" project consortium, the BSEC PERMIS was represented at the Meeting by Executive Manager in charge of project management, Ms. Rositsa Stoeva.

The aim of the meeting was to take stock of the first year of the project's implementation stage covering all work packages. Among the discussed topics was the current status of restoration of the Pilot sites. Special attention was paid to the climate risk reduction through innovative restoration approaches. Financial/business plans for restoration upscaling were also discussed involving national, regional and international financial institutions.

More detailed information related to the meeting, as well as project itself can be found at: <https://rest-coast.eu/>

Marine Litter Action Forum within the "Black Sea CONNECT Project: Coordination of Marine and Maritime Research and Innovation in the Black Sea"



The Marine Litter Action Forum within the "Black Sea CONNECT Project: Coordination of Marine and Maritime Research and Innovation in the Black Sea", was held on 14-15 November 2022 in Istanbul. The main objective of the two-day event was to present the actions already in place for existing and new initiatives and projects in order to best coordinate all efforts toward paving the way for future cutting-edge actions on marine litter pollution in the Black Sea. In his welcome speech, BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu stressed the fact that measures aimed at mitigating the threats posed by plastic marine litter for the environment and human life remain a pressing issue for the region. He also pointed out that stronger multilateral cooperation and more effective institutions are highly needed and the BSEC Organization is ready to do its part in that regard.

More detailed information related to the project activities can be found here: <http://connect2blacksea.org/>

TRANSPORT

BSEC-URTA Working Group on Digitalization

The BSEC PERMIS Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dimitrios Rallis and Project Coordinator Mr. Sergii Kravchenko, participated in the 3rd Meeting of the BSEC-URTA Working Group on Digitalization held online on 22 September 2022. The Working Group aimed to further discuss ways and means to bring digitalization to the international road transport.

The outcomes of the above meeting were considered at the Meetings of the BSEC Member States participating in the Project "BSEC Permit System", as well as of the Steering Committee on Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods.



40th Meeting of the BSEC-URTA General Assembly and the Regional Conference on International Road Transport

The BSEC PERMIS participated in the 40th Meeting of the BSEC-URTA General Assembly, held on 6 October 2022 in Thessaloniki. The General Assembly evaluated the activities of the BSEC-URTA since its previous meeting and took decisions on the future operations of the BSEC-URTA.

In his statement, the BSEC PERMIS Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dimitrios Rallis, underlined that the many years of the joint fruitful work of BSEC with IRU, BSEC-URTA and their member associations are the tangible evidence of the joint efforts of the public and private sectors in seeking innovative approaches for the improvement of regional transport infrastructure networks, removal of physical and administrative barriers, and for the increase of the transit capacity of the regional trade flows.

On 7 October 2022 the PERMIS also participated in the Regional Conference on International Road Transport “Northern Greece: building international transport “Bridges”, organized by the Hellenic Federation of Road Transports (OFAE).



Meeting of the Steering Committee on the Development of the Black Sea Ring Highway



At its 13th Meeting, held online on 24 October 2022, the Steering Committee on the Development of the Black Sea Ring Highway considered a draft BSRH map, presented by the

BSRH Joint Permanent Technical Secretariat (JPTS) reflecting the Member States' BSRH main route status according to the information provided by the Member States, and exchanged views on possible actions needed to enhance and step-up practical cooperation on the development of the BSRH.

The representatives of the JPTS presented a digital GEOPORTAL Platform, developed by the Greek company «EGNATIA ODOS S.A.» and invited the BSEC Member States to consider the possibility of using the above platform in the future activity of the Steering Committee.

Starting from 1 November 2022 the Republic of Moldova and the Republic of Armenia assumed, respectively, the Chairmanship and the Vice-Chairmanship of the Steering Committee for a biannual period.

Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Development of the Motorways of the Sea



At its last Meeting, held online on 25 October 2022, the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Development of the Motorways of the Sea considered the state of affairs with regard to the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Development of the Motorways of the Sea (MoS) at the BSEC Region. The Parties to the MoU were invited to submit concrete national projects in the maritime field, in order to create a BSEC pool of projects. In this regard, the Working Group reiterated its invitation to the Parties to the MoU to steer the next phase of work to the preparation of feasibility studies for MoS projects in their territories, in order to potentially form a portfolio of bankable projects and to facilitate the attraction of interest of the International Financial Institutions (IFIs).

Starting from 1 November 2022 the Republic of Moldova and the Republic of Armenia assumed, respectively, the Chairmanship and the Vice-Chairmanship of the Ad Hoc WG on MoS for a biannual period.

Meeting of the BSEC Member States participating in the Project "BSEC Permit System"



The Meeting of the BSEC Member States participating in the Project "BSEC Permit System" was held online on 1 November 2022. The delegations reiterated the importance of the BSEC Permit System as a useful tool in international transport of goods and underlined the importance of further increasing the geographical coverage of the Permit project.

The participants considered the usage of permits in 2022 and discussed the distribution of the 2023 permits, their number per country, format of usage and organizational aspects concerning their preparation and dispatch.

It was agreed to increase the number of permits for the year 2023 from 3000 to 5000 for the Republic of Albania, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, the Republic of North Macedonia, Romania, the Republic of Serbia, the Republic of Türkiye and Ukraine and to issue 800 permits for the Republic of Armenia.

Steering Committee on Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods in the BSEC Region

The 16th Meeting of the Steering Committee on Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods in the BSEC Region was held online on 8 November 2022. The participants discussed, among others, border-crossing problems in the BSEC region, the BSEC Permit activities, digitalization of transport documents (e-Permit, e-TIR, e-CMR, e-Visa for professional drivers), accession by the BSEC Member States to the UNECE Transport Agreements and Conventions, and cooperation with international road transport organizations.

The Steering Committee unanimously approved Ukraine for the post of Chairman in the Steering Committee for a period of one year, as of 10 November 2022. It also appreciated the valuable contribution of IRU and BSEC-URTA partners in the overall efforts aimed at development of road infrastructure and facilitation of transport of goods in the BSEC Region.



Meetings of the UNECE Group of Experts on the operationalization of e-CMR



Invited by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the BSEC PERMIS followed online on 4-6 October and 9-11 November 2022, the 2nd and 3rd meetings of the

newly established UNECE Group of Experts on the operationalization of e-CMR (Additional Protocol to the CMR concerning the Electronic Consignment Note).

Taking into account that at present six of the BSEC Member States acceded to the Additional Protocol to the United Nations Convention for the carriage of goods, known as the e-CMR (Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Türkiye and Ukraine), the activity of the above Group of Experts, established to discuss and agree on the requirements of Article 5 of the Additional Protocol to CMR, is of interest to BSEC in view of the possible introduction of e-CMR pilot project for the BSEC Region.

PABSEC General Assembly

The last Session of the PABSEC General Assembly took place in Belgrade on 7-8 December 2022.

Members of the Parliaments of the Member States, as well as other prominent politicians from the host country and representatives of international organizations and institutions were among the participants of the Assembly.

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu addressed the General Assembly on BSEC's activities, highlighting the fact that during its thirty years of existence BSEC has asserted itself as a useful framework of multilateral cooperation and as a first-level confidence building mechanism in the very important geostrategic region of the Black Sea. He also referred to the valuable contribution the close cooperation with PABSEC, as well as with the other BSEC Related Bodies has brought to the promotion of BSEC's objectives.

While in Belgrade, BSEC PERMIS Secretary General also had a bilateral meeting with H.E. Mr. Ivica Dacic, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia. A comprehensive exchange of views took place on this occasion on the developments in the BSEC region and on BSEC's priorities for the period ahead.

The Republic of Türkiye took over the Presidency of PABSEC for a period of six months.



International Conference on “Dialogue and Cooperation in the Black Sea and Balkan Regions”

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated in the international conference on “Dialogue and Cooperation in the Black Sea and Balkan Regions” which took place in Bucharest on 12-14 October 2022. During the event organized in the context of BSUN - BUA 2022 Congress, particular attention was given to the role and contribution of university and academic institutions in promoting cooperation and dialogue among the countries and peoples in the regions in question.

A special session of the conference was dedicated to the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the BSEC-Balkan areas, where Ambassador Comanescu as keynote speaker, elaborated in his speech on the activities and actions undertaken by BSEC towards the implementation of the SDGs in the area, while stressing the urgent need of turning back to an atmosphere of cooperation in the BSEC region as a sine qua non prerequisite for success in this endeavor.

Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the CEI Member States and the subsequent Economic Forum

Upon the invitation by the Bulgarian Presidency of the Central European Initiative (CEI), the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated in the Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the CEI Member States and the subsequent Economic Forum, which took place in Sofia, on 7 November 2022.

In his address at the Ministerial Meeting, Ambassador Comanescu stressed that the fruitful cooperation and exchange of experience between BSEC and CEI during the years offer a solid basis for further enhancing this cooperation.

At the Economic Forum, which was dedicated to the economic recovery of the region and the role of small and medium-sized enterprises therein, the Secretary General described SMEs as one of BSEC's top priorities and one of the main activities the organization carries out in this area.

During his stay in Sofia, the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu met with H.E. Mr. Nikolay Milkov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria, in Sofia on 8 November 2022. The meeting provided for an exchange of views on the current developments in the Black Sea area and on the BSEC role in this context.



12th Black Sea Symposium



The International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) organized its 12th Black Sea Symposium on 22 November 2022 in Athens dedicated to: “30 Years of Black Sea Economic Cooperation”.

In his opening remarks, ICBSS Director General Mr. Georgios Mitrakos, highlighted the role of BSEC as the most representative institutional form of cooperation in the wider Black Sea area and its

contribution to the stability and growth of the countries of the region. As a keynote speaker the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu, while reviewing the activities of the Organization during its 30 years of existence, formulated a set of considerations with regard to BSEC’s priorities and role in the years to come. The contribution of the Organization to the cooperation in the wider Black Sea area was highlighted in this context. The relevance and contribution of BSEC Related Bodies (the Parliamentary Assembly – PABSEC, the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank – BSTDB, the ICBSS and the BSEC Business Council - BSECBC) in promoting the objectives of the Organization as well as the importance of the cooperation with international and regional organizations and with Observers and Sectoral Partners were also emphasized.

The Final Conference "Strengthening the project implementation capacity, dialogue and cooperation in the Black Sea Region"

The Final Conference "Strengthening the project implementation capacity, dialogue and cooperation in the Black Sea Region" jointly organized by the BSEC PERMIS and the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) in the framework of the projects Black Sea React!, Black Sea Cruise and CulTourE4Youth, was held on 23 November 2022 in Athens. The event aimed to present the results and applications developed under the three projects, as well as to promote networking, exchange of information among the stakeholders, and to pave the way for concrete follow-up actions.

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu made a review of the activities of the Organization related to its project-oriented approach. He also elaborated on three very important opportunities which were identified during the implementation process, namely: skill development especially for the youth; networking facilitation for the knowledge exchange and collaboration and raising citizen awareness of need of action. The role of the Organization as facilitator of dialogue and cooperation in the wider Black Sea area was also highlighted.

Annual Conference “Black Sea - New Challenges and Opportunities”



Upon the invitation by Ambassador Zviad Chumburidze, Secretary General of the EU-Georgia Business Council (EUGBC), the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated in the Annual Conference “Black Sea - New Challenges and Opportunities”, which took place in Tbilisi on 1 December 2022.

The conference’s main objective was the launch of the “Black Sea Platform” (BSP) – an initiative for cooperation and projects development in the wider Black Sea region particularly in the area of connectivity, as well as in energy and environment among others.

In his statement, Ambassador Comanescu appreciated that the establishment of the BSP is a welcome initiative as its aims at further enhancing the economic cooperation in the Black Sea area.



Balkans and Black Sea Forum

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated as a keynote speaker in the Fourth Edition of the Balkans and Black Sea Forum held in Athens on 13-14 December 2022 and focusing on topics

such as: regional economic cooperation-integration; energy supply and security; environment; innovation and technology; connectivity and infrastructure; global challenges and their impact on the Balkan and Black Sea region.

In his intervention, the Secretary General concentrated on the topic of regional cooperation and integration and highlighted that particular attention should be paid in the future to the cooperation in the areas of infrastructure-connectivity, energy and environment-climate change; better coordination and correlation among the regional organizations active in the BSEC/Balkan regions; identification of and enhancing complementarities; long term and project-oriented approach; enhancing the role of the entrepreneurial community.

School students visit

A group of high school students from CND Schools in Istanbul visited the BSEC PERMIS on 23 November 2022 where they were received by the First Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Barutçu Gökdenizler who provided general information on the Organization and its activities.



Farewell lunch

A lunch was hosted by the Secretary General to bid farewell to Ambassador Ebru Barutçu Gökdenizler and Dr. Sergei Goncharenko who concluded their term-in-office at the Secretariat. It was a privilege and honor for us to have worked over the years with such knowledgeable and experienced colleagues. We herewith convey our sincere gratitude for their valuable contribution to the work of the Organization, as well as for their exemplary professionalism and warm friendship during their tenure in the BSEC PERMIS.





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