



Организация за Черноморско икономическо сътрудничество
Постоянен Международен Секретариат

ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION
Permanent International Secretariat

PROMOTING THE BSEC REGION AS ONE OF THE LEADING TOURISM DESTINATIONS OF THE WORLD

The *Black Sea Economic Cooperation* (BSEC) Region, covering the territories of its 12 Member States, represents 14% of Europe's economy; in 2017 it welcomed 129 million international tourist arrivals, equivalent to 19 % of arrivals in Europe; the growth rate achieved during this year was 12%, well beyond the average rate in Europe, while the tourism earnings were USD 66 billion, covering 13% of Europe's receipts.

The BSEC Organization has been promoting Tourism cooperation among its Member States since its very inception in 1992, through the numerous meetings of Ministers in charge of Tourism, the activities of its *Working Group on Cooperation in Tourism*, seminars and workshops organized alone or with other partners. Of special significance is the cooperation with the *World Tourism Organization* (UNWTO), with which a *Memorandum of Understanding* was signed in 2014.

The main efforts of the BSEC Organization is to promote Tourism as one of the greatest assets of our region, that should be utilized not only for the development of the national economies of the BSEC Member States and for the promotion of regional cooperation, but also for shaping this area as an attractive tourism multi-destination.

In this framework the BSEC Organization has promoted various forms of Touristic cooperation among its Member States, like the establishment of Touristic Routes ("*The Route of the Roman Emperors*", "*The Danube Wine Route*", "*The Byzantine Route*"), the participation of the interested States in the UNWTO Silk Road Program, the hosting of various events and workshops, etc.

The BSEC Organization promotes also the Gastronomic Tourism in its area of interest, the film-induced Tourism as well as the small-scale Cruise Tourism in the Black Sea. Next May it will host, with the support of the UNWTO, an international Seminar on how to attract more Chinese tourists to the region, for the benefit of all its Member States.



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**JOINT VARNA DECLARATION OF THE MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF TOURISM
OF THE MEMBER STATES OF THE ORGANIZATION OF
THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION
(Varna, Republic of Bulgaria, 14 June 2018)**

We, the Ministers in charge of Tourism / Heads of the Tourism Administrations of the Member States of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), met on 14 June 2018 in Varna,

Reaffirming the commitment of the BSEC Member States to strengthening their ties in the field of Tourism, as a significant area of cooperation among the BSEC Member States since the very inception of the BSEC,

Recalling the Declaration of the Ministers of Tourism or Heads of Delegations of the BSEC Member States (Tirana, 2002), the Rhodes Declaration of the Ministers of Tourism of the Member States of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (Rhodos, 2005), the Athens Declaration of the Ministers in charge of Tourism of the BSEC Member States (Athens, 2010), the Declaration of the Ministers in charge of Tourism of the Member States of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (Kyiv, 2013), the Declaration of the Ministers in charge of Tourism of the Member States of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (Athens, 2014), the Joint Declaration of the Conference of the Ministers in charge of Culture and Tourism of the Member States of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (Sochi, 2016), and taking note of the activities of the BSEC Working Group on Cooperation in Tourism,

Guided by the “BSEC Economic Agenda: Towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership”, adopted in 2012, in particular its Goal 8 “Development of Tourism and Protection of Cultural Heritage”,

Recognizing the importance of sustainable Tourism in promoting economic development, investments, mutual understanding, cultural exchange, goodwill and close relations among peoples,

Emphasizing the need to explore in a systematic way the potential of the Region by developing joint innovative projects and organizing international Tourism events in the BSEC Member States that would pave the way for further Tourism exchanges among them,

Taking into consideration the Memorandum of Understanding concluded between the Organization of BSEC and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in Athens in 2014,

Recalling the approval of the Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics by the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) on 15 September 2017 in Chengdu, People's Republic of China;

Affirming the necessity to enrich and diversify Tourism products and to add value to Tourism services offered in the BSEC Member States in order to attract tourists from within and outside the region and meet their needs, by putting forward the rich natural and cultural –tangible and intangible - heritage of the BSEC Member States,

Wishing to encourage the development of Special Interest Tourism forms in the BSEC Member States,

Taking note that, according to UNWTO data, the BSEC Region represents 14% of Europe's economy and that it received 129 million international tourist arrivals or 10 % of total arrivals worldwide, earned USD 66 billion or 5% of global receipts,

Taking also note of the recent encouraging positive trends in Tourism in the BSEC Region,

We declare our intention to:

1. *Work together in the framework of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation to strengthen and bolster Tourism cooperation among the BSEC Member States, as it can help boost Tourism flows between destinations to make sustainable Tourism one of the major drivers of socio-economic development in the BSEC Region.*
2. *Encourage the Ministries and/or National Authorities in charge of Tourism in the BSEC Member States to better coordinate their actions in order to position the BSEC Region as an attractive multi-destination Tourism area, inter alia, by:*
 - a) *Maximizing valuable cultural and environmental resources of the BSEC Member States by investing in the development of multi-destination Tourism products and routes, focusing on experiences rather than places;*
 - b) *Joining efforts in order to strengthen connectivity among the BSEC Member States and other markets, by air, land, rivers and sea, highlighting the importance of a closer coordination between Tourism and transport policies;*
 - c) *Promoting policies aimed at easing visa procedures and other travel facilitation, in accordance with relevant national legislation and international engagements, which would allow visitors from within and outside the BSEC region to move freely towards and within the region in order to increase international tourist arrivals and expenditure;*
 - d) *Exploring the possibilities for future cooperation, particularly by exchanging best practices and sharing experiences on key aspects of travel Tourism among the BSEC Member States, particularly between mature destinations and emerging ones;*
 - e) *Considering greater use of current technology advances and the rise of Digital Tourism, modern marketing tools, such as social media and mobile technologies;*

f) Considering also ways and means of boosting Cruise Tourism in the wider Black Sea area;

g) Encouraging the implementation of Cultural Tourism / Cultural Routes projects in the BSEC Region and, in this context, supporting the proposal on the establishment of an institution called the "Cultural Port of the Black Sea" and the development of new Silk Road projects.

3. *Enhance* the regional dimension of the cooperation in the field of Tourism among the BSEC Member States, *inter alia*, by:

a) further developing Gastronomic and Wine Tourism as well as Film-Induced Tourism, in a sustainable way, as high-value forms of Special Interest Tourism, along with other forms of niche Tourism, such as Agro-Tourism, Rural and Cultural Tourism, Wellness and Spa Tourism;

b) exploring the possibility of establishing a network and partnerships among regional or national, public or private organizations, professional associations and educational institutions from the BSEC Member States, which are involved in promoting Gastronomic and Wine Tourism in their regions/countries, in order to allow the exchange of know-how and best practices;

c) promoting transnational cooperation on joint Tourism projects on Gastronomic and Wine tour itineraries in the BSEC Region, in order to strengthen the national and regional gastronomic identity and culinary culture, including the creation of a BSEC website for the promotion of Wine Tourism in all interested Member States;

d) exploring possibilities for developing joint projects and joint marketing campaigns in the field of sustainable Tourism;

e) considering the possibility of encouraging the development of joint educational and training programs and projects in the overall Tourism sector.

4. *Consider* ways of effective implementation of the *Memorandum of Understanding between BSEC and UNWTO*, signed in Athens on 23 October 2014, with a view to promoting collaboration on concrete projects between the two Organizations.

5. *Instruct* the *BSEC Working Group on Cooperation in Tourism* to follow-up on the progress and the implementation of the provisions of the present Declaration.

6. *Reaffirm* our commitment to strengthen the cooperation and develop synergies with the BSEC Related Bodies, international and regional organizations and initiatives as well as with non-governmental organizations, as such partnerships and synergies offer additional value and strength to our Organization and increase the potential of the BSEC Region in the field of Tourism.

We agree to meet, whenever appropriate, to follow-up on the decisions taken and to consider the matters related to Tourism cooperation among the BSEC Member States.

We express our gratitude to the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria for the excellent organization of the Meeting and for the warm hospitality extended.

Varna, 14 June 2018