



ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Permanent International Secretariat

INFORMAL REPORT OF THE VIDEO-MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON COOPERATION IN EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE AND OF THE BSEC NETWORK OF LIAISON OFFICERS ON EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

3 June 2020

1. The first informal Video-Meeting of the BSEC Working Group on Cooperation in Emergency Assistance and of the BSEC Network of Liaison Officers on Emergency Assistance was held on 3 June 2020 upon the initiative of the BSEC PERMIS.

2. The Meeting was moderated by Mr. Mircea LAZAR, Minister Counsellor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, Representative of the Romanian Chairmanship-in-Office.

3. In his opening remarks the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES stressed the importance of an efficient regional cooperation, the necessity of concrete actions and the concrete expression of solidarity among the Member States in emergency situations. The solidarity in practice among BSEC Member States during an emergency situation is the most important element for a solid foundation of regional cooperation in the Black Sea region, he added.

4. The Video-Meeting of the Working Group on Cooperation in Emergency Assistance and of the BSEC Network of Liaison Officers on Emergency Assistance was attended by representatives from the following BSEC Member States:

1. Republic of Armenia
2. Republic of Azerbaijan
3. Georgia
4. Hellenic Republic
5. Romania
6. Russian Federation
7. Republic of Serbia
8. Republic of Turkey
9. Ukraine

The List of Participants is attached as **Annex I**.

5. The BSEC PERMIS responsible Executive Manager, Dr. Ashot KOCHARIAN, provided information on the current priorities of the Working Group for the third medium-term (2019-2021) of the BSEC Economic Agenda 2012 and made a brief introduction on each discussion point proposed for the Video-Meeting.

DISCUSSION POINT 1: EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON FUTURE ACTIVITIES OF THE BSEC AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON MASSIVE FOREST FIRES, THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON FLOODS AND TORRENTS AND THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP OF EXPERTS IN SEISMIC RISK

6. While exchanging views on future activities of the BSEC Ad Hoc Working Group on Massive Forest Fires, the BSEC Ad Hoc Working Group on Floods and Torrents and the BSEC Ad Hoc Working Group of the Experts in Seismic Risk the representatives of the Republic of Armenia, Romania, the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Serbia, supported the idea of merging the above-mentioned Ad Hoc Working Groups into the “mother” Working Group on Cooperation in Emergency Assistance.

7. The representative of the Republic of Armenia also mentioned that if no consensus could be reached on this issue, the practice of holding joint and back-to-back meetings could be expanded in order to save resources and boost the preparedness and productivity of the meetings.

8. The representatives of Ukraine and the Hellenic Republic supported the idea of merging of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Massive Forest Fires and the BSEC Ad Hoc Working Group on Floods and Torrents into the “mother” Working Group on Cooperation in Emergency Assistance.

9. The PERMIS Secretary General observed that holding the meetings of the above Ad Hoc Working Groups back-to-back or jointly, as proposed, has in practice the same effect as merging these Working Groups into the Working Group on Cooperation in Emergency Assistance. Merging the Ad Hoc Working Groups is also in harmony with the continuous advice of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (CMFA) to diminish the number of Working Groups by, among other, merging some of them and by holding joint meetings.

10. The participants decided to continue deliberations on the matter at the next Meeting of the Working Group under the Coordinator-ship of Romania.

DISCUSSION POINT 2: MODALITIES OF WORK OF THE BSEC NETWORK OF LIAISON OFFICERS ON EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE. PROPOSALS BY THE MEMBER STATES ON IMPROVEMENT OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE NETWORK

11. The participants agreed that the Network of Liaison Officers is an important mechanism to enhance cooperation in the field of emergency assistance and to coordinate the interaction between the competent bodies of BSEC Member States.

12. The participants exchanged views on the matter and stressed the importance of improvement of activities of the BSEC Network of Liaison Officers on Emergency Assistance.

13. The representative of the Republic of Armenia proposed to consider the possibility of convening a joint meeting of the Working Group on Cooperation in Emergency Assistance and the Working Group on Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals in the near future (with possible participation of respective Liaison Officers) which would be beneficial for the Member States in light of the current Covid-19 pandemic.

14. The BSEC PERMIS requested the Member States to provide the updated list of focal points of the BSEC Network of Liaison Officers on Emergency Assistance. It further underlined that Member States have to decide on who sets in motion this Network, who chairs it and who takes the initiative if action is necessary to be taken by the Network of Liaison Officers.

DISCUSSION POINT 3: EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON CONCRETE MECHANISMS FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION PARTICULARLY ON ESTABLISHING A REGIONAL COMMUNICATION PLATFORM FOR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

15. The BSEC PERMIS stressed the importance of concrete and efficient mechanisms as well as coordinated actions in emergency situations. After so many years of meetings, of Agreements and Protocols, the detailed framework for action exists on paper and it is high time to agree on the mechanisms for transforming it into action, whenever needed.

16. The representative of the Republic of Armenia underlined the essential role of information exchange. In this context creation of a special portal integrated into the website of the BSEC Organization, where Liaison Officers of the Member States can post the relevant information, was proposed.

17. The representative of the Russian Federation highlighted the existing differences in internal legislative procedures of the BSEC Member States and mentioned that the mechanism of the humanitarian response in the Russian Federation can be implemented only upon the Presidential Decree or the decision of the Government.

18. The representative of Ukraine proposed to hold a joint online exercise on emergency preparedness.

DISCUSSION POINT 4: COUNTRY-COORDINATOR-SHIP OF THE WORKING GROUP ON COOPERATION IN EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE. EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON THE WAYS OF CONTINUOUS COOPERATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION

19. The representative of the current Country-Coordinator, the Hellenic Republic, mentioned that, unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic situation did not allow to host the Meeting of the Working Group in Athens, as it was initially envisaged.

20. The Hellenic Republic confirmed that it will finalize and submit the Evaluation Report for the period of its Coordinator-ship (1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020).

21. The representative of Romania, the next Country-Coordinator of the Working Group (1 July 2020-30 June 2021) expressed its readiness to include into the Plan of Action all important directions of the activities of the Working Group.

22. Romania was requested to send the draft Plan of Action to the BSEC PERMIS in advance for circulation it among the BSEC Member States.

DISCUSSION POINT 5: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

23. No issue was raised under this point.

CONCLUSION OF THE VIDEO-CONFERENCE

24. The participants welcomed the initiative of the BSEC PERMIS in organizing the Video-Meeting of the BSEC Working Group on Cooperation in Emergency Assistance and of the Liaison Officers of the BSEC Network on Emergency Assistance.

25. The Moderator closed the first informal Video-Meeting organized by the BSEC PERMIS with his concluding remarks.