



**PRESS RELEASE ON  
3<sup>rd</sup> UNWTO/UNESCO WORLD CONFERENCE ON TOURISM AND CULTURE**

Upon the invitation of the organizers, the Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS, Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES participated in the *3<sup>rd</sup> UNWTO/UNESCO World Conference on Tourism and Culture* (Istanbul, Turkey, 3-4 December 2018), jointly organized by UNWTO, UNESCO and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey.

The main aim of the Conference was to help create more inclusive partnerships between Tourism and Culture stakeholders that can contribute to the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and promote Tourism development that boosts cultural interaction and ensures benefits for all Communities involved. More than 40 Ministers and 400 representatives from governmental and non-governmental institutions dealing with Culture and Tourism from all over the world attended.

The key note speech was delivered by H.E. Ms. Marie-Louise COLEIRO PRECA, President of Malta, who raised a number of important issues concerning the relationship between Culture and Tourism, questions that were further addressed and amplified by various speakers during the Conference.

The main event of the Conference was the “Ministerial Segment” which brought together 34 panelists, Ministers in charge of Culture and/or Tourism from various countries (among them only four from the BSEC Member States), the Chairman of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics and the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General. Answering to the tailored questions of the Moderator, the participants shared good practice examples on how policies can be aligned to accelerate the shift towards sustainable development; how their respective countries are supporting public-private partnerships and ways of strengthening tripartite collaboration between Tourism, Culture and local Communities.

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General in his remarks dwelled upon BSEC activities in the area of Culture and Tourism, informing participants on the main achievements of the respective BSEC Working Groups. He further underlined the importance of the sustainable development of Tourism, especially in what concerns its uncontrolled expansion to smaller Communities, which risk losing their local traditions and cultural heritage if, in the search for greater income, their inhabitants abandon their local activities, handicrafts, production of local delicacies, etc. and switch to become part of the Tourism services industry.

Further discussions were organized within the three distinct sessions that followed; at the end of the Conference, a draft “*Istanbul Declaration on Tourism and Culture*” was proposed for adoption; finally, it was decided that the next World Conference on Tourism and Culture will be held in Kyoto, Japan.

On the sidelines of the Conference, Ambassador CHRISTIDES had the opportunity to exchange views on issues of joint interest with a number of the high participants and held an ad-hoc bilateral meeting with the Deputy Director of UNESCO, concerning the further promotion of the relations between the two Organizations.