



PRESS RELEASE
THE HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON BSEC-EU COOPERATION
(Brussels, 18 June 2019)

The first ever “**High-Level Conference on BSEC - EU Cooperation**”, co-organized by the BSEC PERMIS and the European Commission’s Directorate for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), within the framework and with the support of the Bulgarian BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office and the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, was hosted in Brussels on the 18th of June 2019.

The main objective of the Conference was to underline the importance of BSEC-EU cooperation in the wider Black Sea region by promoting bottom-up economic policies with the direct involvement of the interested stakeholders, i.e. Members of the BSEC Organization and to indicate ways for the further enhancement of the working relationship between the two entities in the immediate future.

The first part of the event was dedicated to the welcome addresses of the co-organizers and of the participating Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Heads of Delegations. Thus, statements were delivered by H.E. Mr. Teodor-Viorel MELEȘCANU, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania; H.E. Ms. Emilia KRALEVA, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria and Mr. Juergen MUELLER, Head of Cabinet, on behalf of H.E. Mr. Karmenu VELLA, EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries.

Immediately after, important speeches on the BSEC-EU relations were offered by H.E. Mr. Ivica DAČIĆ, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia; H.E. Mr. Giorgos KATROUGALOS, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic; H.E. Mr. Carmelo ABELA, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion of the Republic of Malta; H.E. Mr. Mahmud MAMMAD-GULIYEV, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan; H.E. Mr. Faruk KAYMAKCI, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey; Mr. Thomas MAYR-HARTING from the European External Action Service, and others.

The above first part of the event was moderated by the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES who welcomed the high attendees by reminding that this first-ever attempt to bring together the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of BSEC and EU Member States aims, on the one hand, to underline the importance of the working relationship between the two Organizations and, on the other, to jointly formulate the way for coordination and cooperation in the immediate future.

He stressed that the only answer to existing problems can be more dialogue and enhanced economic cooperation and, in this respect, BSEC is the perfect, indeed, the unique, regional “vehicle” for achieving the above. He added: “*We in BSEC wish to continue cooperating with the EU in an open, mutually beneficial and balanced way, we wish to be involved in the formulation and implementation of good practices or projects that concern the Black Sea region, because we believe that regional ownership and bottom-up approaches are the only way to lasting and sustainable development achievements in our region*”.



During the second part of the event a panel of distinguished speakers, moderated by Professor Dr. Ilter TURAN, engaged in a highly interesting exchange of views on how better to promote sustainable economic development in the Black Sea region, how to better coordinate activities in order to achieve greater effectiveness and how to better finance projects with wider regional impact.

Ambassador CHRISTIDES closed the event expressing the hope that Ministers of Foreign Affairs of BSEC and EU Member States will share and support the ambition and determination to institutionalize this event and hold it, at regular intervals, in Brussels or in BSEC's home-city, Istanbul, with a jointly prepared agenda, containing concrete cooperation items of mutual interest and benefit.

The Conference was attended by more than hundred and twenty participants and attracted the interest of the media in many BSEC Member States.