



PRESS RELEASE
ON THE REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS CONFERENCE
“BLACK SEA SYNERGY: THE WAY FORWARD”
(Athens, 7 November 2019)

The **Regional Stakeholders Conference “Black Sea Synergy: the way forward”** was organised on 7 November in Athens, Hellenic Republic, by the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) within the framework of the Hellenic BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office and with the financial support of the European Commission, DG NEAR.

The main objective of the conference was to provide a platform for dialogue for stakeholders from EU Member States and non-EU Black Sea countries, to stimulate the discussion on the future of the Black Sea Synergy initiative in a project-oriented way, in the short and medium term.

Welcome addresses were delivered by Mr. George MITRAKOS, Director General of ICBSS, Ms. Ms. Ioanna EFTHYMIADOU, Minister Plenipotentiary B, Director B2 Directorate for Bilateral Economic Relations with Balkan, CIS & OCBS countries, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, Mr. Alexandru ENE, Director for the Western Balkans and Regional Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, Ms. Julia TZEROVA, Head of Regional Cooperation Dept., Southeastern Europe Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria and by Mr. Vassilis MARAGOS, Head of Unit Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus & Eastern Partnership, DG NEAR, European Commission.

The keynote speech was delivered by Ms. Audrone PERKAUSKIENE, Head of Division Eastern Partnership, Regional Cooperation and OSCE, European External Action Service (EEAS), who stressed on the bottom-up and voluntary-based approach of the participating states in the Black Sea Synergy initiative.

The Secretary General of BSEC PERMIS, Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES, welcomed all dignitaries and participants to the event, underlining that the enhancement of BSEC-EU cooperation in a balanced and project-oriented way ranks high among BSEC priorities; our objective, he added, is to give practical content to the interaction with the EU and put into profit BSEC’s unique experience, its project management capacity and its ability to stimulate the participation of various stakeholders from the region.

Almost 100 participants from the public and private sectors took active part in the four structured workshops (culture and tourism, energy, transport and education), thus demonstrating the keen interest of all to contribute to the beneficial objectives of this important initiative. After lively deliberations many useful conclusions were drawn which will be further elaborated and published in a Concept Paper by the ICBSS as a guide for the future promotion of joint projects within the Black Sea Synergy.

The Conference offered an interactive platform for discussion and debate and gave many opportunities for networking between experts, scientists, entrepreneurs and organizations active in the region.