



PRESS RELEASE
ON THE 26TH UN TOURISM GENERAL ASSEMBLY

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated in the 26th UN Tourism General Assembly, held in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, from 7 to 11 November 2025, under the theme “AI-Powered Tourism: Redefining the Future.”

Opened by H.E. Mr. Ahmed Al-Khateeb, Minister of Tourism of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, this year’s General Assembly, the first organized in a Gulf country, coincided with the 50th anniversary of UN Tourism. The event brought together ministers and senior officials from more than 160 States, heads and other representatives of international organizations, as well as leading tourism stakeholders. The agenda included high-level plenary sessions, elections for the next UN Tourism Secretary General, thematic discussions on artificial intelligence and sustainability, as well as meetings of the Executive Council and specialized committees.

A key highlight was the adoption of the Riyadh Declaration on the Future of Tourism, which sets out shared principles for ethical, inclusive, and responsible AI adoption across the global tourism ecosystem.

During the Plenary of Affiliate Members, Ambassador Comanescu focused on the cooperation between BSEC and UN Tourism, emphasizing tourism as a key driver of economic growth, peace, and regional connectivity in the Wider Black Sea area. He highlighted BSEC’s priorities, including the development of cross-border cultural and heritage routes, the promotion of gastronomy and wine tourism programs, and the fostering of knowledge-sharing platforms for capacity-building, youth engagement, and academic exchanges. Ambassador Comanescu reaffirmed the Organization’s full commitment to supporting joint initiatives and advancing sustainable, innovative, and inclusive tourism across the region.

On the sidelines of the event, Ambassador Comanescu briefly exchanged with the outgoing Secretary General Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili to thank him for his steadfast support and constructive engagement with BSEC throughout his tenure. He also met with and conveyed best wishes to the incoming Secretary General, Ms. Shaikha Al Nowais, expressing at the same his confidence that the already strong collaboration between UN Tourism and BSEC will continue to deepen – creating new opportunities and delivering tangible benefits for BSEC Member States and the wider Black Sea region.

Ambassador Comanescu also held a meeting with H.E. Mr. Gevorg Papoyan, Minister of Economy of the Republic of Armenia. Both sides reaffirmed their resolve to advance joint priorities, recognizing tourism as a key catalyst for dialogue, regional connectivity, and mutual understanding among peoples. Discussions focused on ongoing and future collaboration within the BSEC framework, with particular emphasis on tourism, cultural cooperation, and other areas under the Armenian Country-Coordinator role.