

MEETING OF AD HOC STUDY GROUP OF EXPERTS CHARGED WITH THE ELABORATION OF A DRAFT WORKING PAPER ON BSEC-EU INTERACTION

REPORT

PREPARED BY THE ICBSS

SUMMARY

The ad hoc Group of Expert was mandated by the Komotini Meeting of the Council Ministers of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation to elaborate a draft working paper on the BSEC-EU interaction. The meeting of the group was organized by the International Center for Black Sea Studies and took place on 6-7 September 2005 in Mati (Attica). The meeting was attended by the representatives of the BSEC Member-States, participants from the BSEC PERMIS, BSTDB, ICBSS, European Commission and the UK Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The participants held a detailed exchange of views on the current state and prospects of BSEC-EU interaction. They presented general statements on the objectives and modalities of an enhanced BSEC-EU relationship and focused specifically on the following agenda items:

- Priority areas where more substantial cooperation between the BSEC and the EU corresponded to mutual interests and provided value added
- Institutional aspects of BSEC – EU interaction
- Ideas for an outline of the draft Working Paper on BSEC-EU interaction

The ad hoc Group of Experts on BSEC-EU interaction agreed to draw the attention of the BSEC Committee of Senior Officials to the proposal put forward by the Delegation of the Hellenic Republic and supported by the ad hoc Group to mandate the Hellenic Republic to proceed with exploratory actions through consultations with the relevant EU institutions with a view to the adoption of a Declaration by the EU Council on the enhancement of the BSEC-EU partnership and the eventual formulation of an appropriate regional “Dimension” of the EU.

OPENING REMARKS

The meeting started with “Opening Remarks” Session, when the participants expressed their attitudes towards and exchanged their views on the state of affairs in the BSEC-EU interaction.

The representative of the Moldovan Chairmanship-in-Office V.Pituscan welcomed the initiative undertaken by the Council of Ministers of the BSEC and stated that the Republic of Moldova supports the idea of updating the Platform for Cooperation between BSEC and EU.

Director General of the ICBSS Professor Thanos Veremis: presented the following three main incentives for reconsidering the fundamentals of BSEC -EU affairs:

- the institutional and operational maturity that the BSEC has acquired;
- the enlargement process of the EU and its implications for the region;
- the new quality of bilateral affairs between each BSEC member state and the EU, especially in the post 2004 enlargement period.

Having stressed that the goal of the ad hoc Group of Experts is to produce a concept paper, which will constitute a new basis for a meaningful and realistic BSEC – EU interaction, he stated that:

- In order to proceed forward with the mandate received, the ad hoc Group of Experts needs to be innovative but it also needs to draw upon BSEC’s experience so far as well as upon the experience of the EU with other regional organizations.
- In order to be credible and effective, the new BSEC comprehensive approach towards the EU should include clear goals and practical modalities rather than general statements;
- To advance and strengthen BSEC’s voice in European and world affairs, BSEC will have to formulate its own vision and to develop practical solutions on how it can function as a reliable partner for other organizations which are active in the region.

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General, Tedo Japaridze describing the situation in the regional cooperation in the Black Sea analyzed BSEC-EU interaction and stated:

- The BSEC should start talking strategically and acknowledge some recent facts and developments and answer the question how it should fit in a new strategic landscape vis-à-vis the EU in order to deliver concrete thoughts and actions to initiate BSEC-EU interaction;
- The BSEC needs to use its regional outlook to foster a globalization early warning system and communicate its views as widely as possible to harness benefits of the globalization and to communicate the results as widely as possible.
- Possible weakness of the EU approach to the region is that it focuses too tightly on individual countries;
- Despite the fact that there is strong pessimism in the EU about the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Brussels needs new relationship with the Wider Black Sea region and the Organization might produce these relationships despite all the prejudices and fears EU harboring about the region, in short the BSEC should be seen in Brussels as an essential enabler of the Neighborhood Policy.
- Assignment of the EU investment banker to particular regions of the BSEC Member States so they look at the potential niche markets in Europe could become an example of involving the EU at a lower level.

Alternate Director General of the ICBSS Amb. Sergiu Celac ICBSS briefed the participants on the terms of reference of the ad hoc group of experts, attached as Annex 1. **Representative of the Hellenic Delegation Amb. Crysanthopoulos** briefed the participants about the activities of the Hellenic Chairmanship-in-Office of the BSEC which included organization of the extraordinary meeting of the BSEC Committee of Senior Officials in Brussels, where the both sides, EU and BSEC Organization expressed their willingness to reexamine changing realities in the region and adjust their relations and achieved an agreement to review BSEC Platform for Cooperation between EU-BSEC of 1999. **Amb. Crysanthopoulos** also stated that:

- The Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization offers for the European Union a very useful forum, which can be taken advantage of in the construction and application of an integrated holistic regional approach for the geographical area;
- The BSEC organization has two main characteristics that should be taken into account in any attempt to construct a solid and useful relationship with the EU. On the one hand, the development needs of the area are increasing and the BSEC faces considerable financial limitations in its effort to shoulder a significant burden as an independent actor. On the other hand, however, BSEC does provide an important regional forum that brings together countries belonging to a wider area with common characteristics.
- A suitable framework, upon which future cooperation with the European Union can be built, may be offered by the existing example of the “Northern Dimension” (ND) Policy that is already in its fifth year of operation. A similar holistic regional approach could be considered for the Black Sea region through a “Southern Dimension” or “Black Sea Dimension” for the purpose of better coordinating existing and future development policies in the area.

Amb. Crysanthopoulos later on transmitted his **proposal of concrete actions** to be undertaken in the near future. The measures proposed are as follows:

- Contribution to the **preparation of a concept paper** (in cooperation with PERMIS, the current Chairmanship-in-Office and the ICBSS) based on the outcome of the meeting of the ad hoc Group of Experts and submitted for approval to the Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs. This concept paper should guide the first consultations with the EU;
- A **new mandate** to be given to Greece country by the forthcoming Council of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Organization, in Chisinau with intent to proceed further actions to the EU, on behalf of the BSEC, in particular the establishment of the “Southern Dimension”;
- An **Action Plan**, which could be elaborated in cooperation with the European Commission in a later stage and under the condition the idea of “Southern Dimension” to be agreed by the EU,;

- Renewing BSEC's invitation so the Commission to join BSEC Organization, either as a **full member or as an observer** in order to achieve a more active involvement of the European Commission to BSEC process.

Mr. Busini from the European Commission reassured highest consideration the EU has about the BSEC, expressed in the Communication on European Neighborhood Policy, and stressed the importance of the following steps to be taken:

- Due to multifaceted of the EU, the BSEC should correctly address its initiatives within the EU structure, referring to the Council as the most appropriate instrument.
- The [BSEC] Organization should be more focused and more realistic in his approaches. It should clarify its identity, priorities, and actions before knocking the EU door.
- [The BSEC] should clarify and put strongly than before its self-interest and present it very clearly and to approach Commission with a clearly defined framework for cooperation.

Mr. Busini also noted that the idea of Northern Dimension should be considered as a basic idea, but special reconsideration should be made since the Northern Dimension was launched in different historic conditions before EU Enlargement and it can be improved.

Representative of the Republic of Turkey Mr. Ali Sait AKIN expressed full agreement with the ideas and initiatives proposed by the Hellenic Republic and said that:

- In the view of the EU Enlargement there is a obvious need to establish a strong link, but not only between two organizations, but between two regions, where [BSEC] Member States play special role.
- The BSEC was very slow in producing any results so the involvement of the European Union can contribute to the improvement of the BSEC cooperation.

The representatives of the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB) Mr. Gavras pointed out that:

- One of the significant assets the BSEC possesses is its **extensive organizational infrastructure** and **real investments** put by the Member –States into BSEC process.

- Compared with other regional initiatives, BSEC is an organization owned by its Member-States for their benefit.
- Northern Dimension is characterized by strong political commitments undertaken by the EU Member-States in that region, Finland, Denmark and Sweden; therefore for such a model to be implemented in the Black Sea, the initiative of the Hellenic Republic is highly important, the role of the accession countries Bulgaria and Romania is also of high significance in this respect.

BUILDING AN ENHANCED BSEC – EU RELATION:

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS, OBJECTIVES AND MODALITIES

Participants from each BSEC Member State presented views and examined different considerations about the basis for an enhanced BSEC – EU relations:

Mr. Dimitris Triantafylou, representing the Hellenic Republic stated that:

- The European Union in the Communication about the European Neighborhood Policy introduced a new approach for the relations with its neighbors. Therefore, one could suggest it is a time for the Commission to come out with a new Communication regarding the BSEC.
- In light of the developments taking place in the EU, the Commission could be advised to come out with a new communiqué to the Parliament and to the Council defining the new role for the BSEC.

Mr. Stanimir Jovanovic representing Serbia and Montenegro emphasized the BSEC should take advantage of the Austrian Presidency of the European Union, since Austria knows the region and was always actively involved in the Balkans.

Representatives of the Republic of Bulgaria Mr.Theodoros Rusinov supported the idea of Turkey about the establishment of more pragmatic and concrete relations with the European Union, defining concrete project proposal. **Mr. Rusinov** also stated that:

- Geographically and historically the countries of the Black Sea region were always closely linked to Europe, but until present moment the European Union had no clear vision how to create close relationships with countries or with the whole region;
- The BSEC can propose for the utilization its structure for the realization of the EU goals in the region.

Representative of the Hellenic Republic Amb. Crysanthopoulos discussing the possible Action Plan offered:

- A step by step approach where the first step would be a Declaration made by the EU on the Black Sea Dimension, which would include basic principles of cooperation and political dialogue;
- Whereas the next step could be an Action Plan similar to that of the Northern Dimension for the period of 2004-2006.

Representative of Ukraine Mr. Ihor Yeremenko supported the idea of preparation or elaboration of an Action Plan o the BSEC-EU Cooperation.

Representative of the European Commission Mr. Giuseppe Bussini stressed that a special EU Declaration on the BSEC-EU relations can be initiated by the Hellenic Republic as a Member State of the European Union and BSEC simultaneously or the Finnish Presidency of the EU in the second semester 2006.

Representative of the Hellenic Republic Amb. Crysanthopoulos agreed that a new mandate could be given to Greece by the forthcoming Council of Minister of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC with intent to proceed to further actions to the EU on behalf of the BSEC, in particular the establishment Black Sea and Southern Dimension. An Action Plan could become the next phase.

Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan Mr. Anar Huseynov supported the initiative of the Hellenic Republic of elaboration of an Action Plan and offered the following measures to enhance BSEC-EU cooperation:

- To take advantage of the potential of Observer-States which can contribute to the development of the BSEC cooperation;
- To use more efficiently the Project Development Fund and the projects financed in its framework as an instrument for promotion of the BSEC-EU relations;
- To involve EU experts into the Steering Committee of the Project Development Fund, and other concrete projects of common interest like energy, protection of the environment;
- To take advantage of the ICBSS opportunities and its relations with Brussels based think-tanks;
- To establish special working groups on specific areas for cooperation energy, environment, transport, etc.

Representative of the European Commission Mr. Giuseppe Bussini supported the idea presented by the Republic of Azerbaijan about possible spheres for cooperation:

- Energy
- Transportation
- Environment.

However insisting on the pragmatism in BSEC-EU relations, he suggested that the formal observer-status is quite hard task to achieve due to the protracted bureaucratic procedures and legal hindrance in the Council of the European Union and offered to see this issue in a longer term prospect.

Mr. Bussini also suggested that representatives of the member States focus on the elaboration of an Action Plan and other practical issues, e.g. programs, common projects, etc.

Mr. Ali Sait AKIN (Republic of Turkey) stressed that due to inefficient character of Observer-Status, focus should be made on the partnership format of BSEC-EU relations, like Barcelona Process, Northern Dimension.

Representing Armenia **Mr. Paruyr Hovhannisyan** offered to combine three different approaches in the relations with the EU, in particular:

- To discuss realistically what can be character of the BSEC-EU relations;
- To initiate parallel process of observer–status for the EU;

- To put on the table all the possible projects and cooperation programs in the following spheres of cooperation: Fight against Organized Crime, Science and Technology, Research and Development;

Mr.Hovhannisyán also agreed with the necessity of more effective use of the existing structures, including EU Representative for the South Caucasus.

The Russian Federation represented by Mr. S.Goncharenko praising the idea of the BSEC to articulate more vividly its policy towards the EU, stressed however that **not all the Member-States share the same vision of their relations with the EU and intent to integrate with the European Union.** Nevertheless, recognizing that as soon as cooperation between the BSEC and EU not implying integration is possible, the following measures can be taken in order to improve this development:

- To consider applying a new model of the relations with the EU with possible borrowing one from EU' relations with external partners (EU-US, ENP, Norwegian, Swiss models);
- To study models of the EU relations with other international economic organizations;
- To formulate goals of the BSEC-EU relations, which should precede BSEC-EU document;
- To examine the issues of status, namely the status for the BSEC within the EU, and vice-versa;
- To study prospects and benefits of the concessions of the BSEC Member States, namely whether they should formalize these concessions through some agreements;
- To study the opportunities of improving the formal skills of the BSEC PERMIS so that they can coordinate and interact efficiently with the EU;
- To provide opportunities for BSEC Member-States to regularly exchange views, experience with the relevant EU representatives;
- To train experts of the BSEC Member-States in government bodies and agencies providing them with necessary knowledge and experience for enhancing the BSEC-EU cooperation;
- To launch regular meetings with the European Union.

Written proposals by the representative of the Russian Federation Mr. Goncharenko, which were transmitted later on, included the following recommendations to be submitted the BSEC Committee of Senior Officials:

1. Each BSEC Working Group / BSEC Related Body should be asked to prepare its proposal (size – one page) on its vision of BSEC-EU cooperation within the framework of the Working Group / BSEC Related Body.
2. This proposal should include what projects that are suitable for attracting EU interests to this Working Group / BSEC Related Body; the financial support expected and / or needed from the EU; the results they wish to achieve through EU participation.
3. Persons in charge of this task are representatives of country-coordinator of the Working Group (in the Working Groups with no country-coordinator – BSEC PERMIS staff), and Heads of the BSEC Related Bodies (PABSEC, Business Council, BSTDB, ICBSS).
4. Proposals should be well-defined mentioning what instruments should be used.
5. Advice and/or support from the EU in preparing this list is welcomed.
- 6.

Representing Romania Mr. Razvan Rusu stressed that as there are weak chances to formalize BSEC-EU relations, due to the unresolved issues of regional ownership and identity and weak political commitment, the first step to be taken in the BSEC-EU relations is to achieve a **high political declaration**. Then there is a need of the EU to call for the BSEC Member States to come with **proposals for Action Plan**.

The participants discussed the idea of the Greek representative Amb. Crysanthopoulos to mandate the Hellenic Republic to raise in the Council of General Affairs of the EU the issue of Political Declaration on establishing dialogue with the BSEC setting general principles and supported this initiative to be submitted for the approval by the Committee of Senior Officials and the Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the BSEC.

Representing Moldova Mr. V. Pituscan proposed that in the initiative proposed by the Hellenic Republic be included a mandate for the European Commission to update its Communication on the Black Sea region of 1997.

DISCUSSION ABOUT THE IDENTITY OF THE BSEC

Several remarks made by **the Representative of the European Commission Giuseppe Bussini** that BSEC is lacked of common vision of its nature and that of **Mr. Stanimir Jovanovic (Serbia and Montenegro)** who stressed the BSEC should define what it is, what the goal of the BSEC is, as well as statements by other participants, produced compromised discussion about the identity of the BSEC, where the participants expounded their views about the current state of affairs, problems and added value of the BSEC.

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Tedo Japaridze analyzing the history and character of the Organization stressed that:

- BSEC has fulfilled its task in the past, but the world has changed and the experts should decide how they should recalibrate the organization, define its agenda, tasks and challenges and first within the BSEC.
- One of the deficits of the BSEC is that the organization remains an intergovernmental structure while it needs to become more International one;
- Economic character of the Organization was shifted to the political cooperation and there is a need to open the Organization for business, investors, etc, which is out of the process, but could produce added value.

Representative of the Hellenic Republic Amb. Crysanthopoulos stressed that:

- BSEC was a forum, which contributed to the security thorough regular and informal contacts of once warring sides;
- It also contributed to the economic development in the region referring to the experiences of the Greek entrepreneur running their businesses in Caucasus.

The representative of Georgia Mr. David Kereslidze stressed that the identity of the organization is more or less defined in its documents but **what the BSEC lacks, it is efficiency in implementation of its goals.**

Mr. Aikin (Republic of Turkey) stressed the role of the BSEC is a **promoter of stability** if the region.

Representing Ukraine, Ihor Yermenko suggested that BSEC should adopt problem- and project-oriented approaches for cooperation inside of the BSEC and in the contacts with third parties, using exact common ideas.

PRIORITY AREAS FOR COOPERATION

Participants from each BSEC Member State discussed various domains for possible BSEC-EU interactions and pointed out the following priority areas, where cooperative actions between the BSEC and the EU should be pursued:

Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS Mr. Japaridze proposed to consider **energy** as a decisive factor in relations of the BSEC and the EU bringing to the table an idea of **establishing a joint pipeline working group**.

Representative of the Russian Federation Mr. Goncharenko suggested that the areas of the BSEC-EU cooperation can be

- Transport
- Infrastructure
- Energy
- Combating organized crime
- Emergencies.

Representing Romania Mr. Razvan Rusu stressed that **the principle of multilateralism and democratic security** should prevail in the outcome of the debates over the Black Sea and future BSEC-EU-BSEC relations. He also noted that **security related issues especially navigation issues** should be indivisible from the process.

Representative of the Hellenic Republic Amb. Crysanthopoulos discussing the possible Action Plan offered five following priority areas:

- Economy, business, infrastructure
- Human resource, education, cultural scientific research and health
- Environment, nuclear safety, natural resources
- Cross-border cooperation and regional development

- Justice and home affairs.

Representing Armenia Paruyr Hovhannisyan offered to put on the table all the possible projects and cooperation programs in the following spheres:

- Fight against Organized Crime;
- Science and Technology;
- Research and Development.

Mr. V.Pituscan (Republic of Moldova) proposed the following areas of cooperation:

- Economy with priority areas of transport, infrastructure
- Political sphere, including security issues, namely terrorism and separatism, and good governance.

Mr. Gavras (Black Sea Trade and Development Bank) stressed crucial importance of trade and economic cooperation and proposed specific actions to be undertaken in these domains:

- Trade liberalization and facilitation of memoranda of understanding,
- Facilitation of border crossing, where substantial progress has been made within the Stability Pact;
- Banking and finance, payment profiles, credit bureaus, legislation harmonization, dialogue of the President of the Central Banks of the BSEC Member-States
- Mutual investment protection and facilitation.

The representative of the Republic of Turkey Mr. Akin stressed that the process of the BSEC-EU Partnership should not be institutionalized, but remain an open evolutionary process. Mr. Akin defined the following priority areas for cooperation:

- Political aspect, which should include the following priorities: confidence-building, conflict prevention, promotion of the good governance and human rights.
- Economic aspect which should include: trade facilitation, promotion of investment, upgrading of economic infrastructure in the areas of transport, energy and communication, development of human resources.
- Social pillar in the framework of which dialogue between cultures and civilizations, with education of youth, education and media could be promoted.

Representing Republic of Albania Ms. Bleda, having singled out the **fight against terrorism** as a priority, proposed the following spheres and actions for cooperation:

- To extend developing in the South-East Europe Common Market to the Black Sea region and link it with European markets;
- To connect structures for energy transit from the Caspian region and Central Asia with transport infrastructure projects, namely Pan-European corridors passing through the Balkans, with further interlink with the European part.

Amb. Celac (ICBSS) stated that despite the lack of the luster performance in economics BSEC demonstrated success stories in the following spheres:

- Justice and Home affairs where the BSEC produced two Agreement on Cooperation in Combating Crime, two additional protocols;
- Ministerial Conference in Science and Technology, where special Action Plan and Declaration were adopted;

He also stressed that the BSEC is running several European projects which budget is equal to the budget of the whole BSEC, requested the representative of the European Commission to promote the process of realization of the Communication of 1997 or preparation of an updated version of Communication and proposed energy security sphere as necessary domain for elaboration.

The representatives of Bulgaria Mr. Theodoros Rusinov proposed the following actions and areas for cooperation:

- Economic domain stressing that Eurointegration and infrastructure should be the motto of the BSEC-EU relations, concentrating on the implementation of economic programs. energy transit and infrastructure projects with regional and European importance;
- Political cooperation aimed at contributing to the enhancement of peace and security in the BSEC region by means of fights against organized crime, trans-border cooperation;
- Social pillar through the enforcement of the European standards and convincing the other side to cooperate in these spheres. science, good governance. environment.

Mr. Theodoros Rusinov also proposed to take advantage of the existing projects run by the EU in the Black Sea region such as: Inter-state Oil and Gas to Europe (INOGATE), Transport Corridor to Europe Caucasus and Asia (TRASECA), Pan-European Transport

Area Program (BLACKSEAPETRA), Danube-Black Sea Environment Task Force Initiative (DANBLAS).

The representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan Mr. Anar Huseynov offered to establish special working groups on specific areas for cooperation **energy, environment, transport, etc.**

The representative of the European Commission Mr. Giuseppe Bussini supported the idea presented by the Republic of Azerbaijan about possible spheres for cooperation and added five following clusters for the cooperation and suggested that special idea of specific instruments to be used in these wide areas:

1. Transport and energy networks – infrastructure;
2. Justice and home affairs (fight against terrorism, illegal migration, trafficking in human beings) which can be very useful and clearest added value.
3. Trade and economic cooperation (border management, crossings, procedures, authorities training)
4. Social-institutional clusters (good governance, democratization, civil society, human resources development: exchange of students, training programs through useful community programs that can help)
5. Environment and sustainable development.

Representatives of the Presidency of the European Union Ms. Beverly Darkin took the floor and agreed with the position of the EC that the **priorities should be more concrete and have common ground with the EU**, giving an example of South-East European Energy Community with the forthcoming of signature of Treaty.

Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS Mr. Tedo Japaridze and representative of Romania Mr. Razvan Rusu proposed an idea of inviting some representatives of the **entrepreneurial circles** who could offer their specific sphere and projects in the framework of the aforementioned clusters, which can be financed by the BSTDB and EU.

DISCUSSION ON FUNDS

Referring to the topic of the funding, **Mr. Bussini** emphasised that one of the reasons behind the success of Northern Dimension was the combination of the Commission and national, local funds allocated to this project. He stressed that **mobilizing its own human, financial resources and capacity skills** and not relying on those of the Commission. BSEC could demonstrate its credibility to the European Union.

Representative of Ukraine Mr. Ihor Yeremenko analyzing the issue of fund-raising proposed to consider special cooperation of the institutional structures of the BSEC/BSTDB-EBRD/EU.

Representing Romania Mr. Razvan Rusu proposed to consider organization of a **Donor Conference** to get the funds as the third step to be taken by the BSEC after a Political Declaration and Action Plan. The participants exchanged views on possible role the BSTDB could play in financing BSEC-EU cooperation projects.

Representative of the BSTDB Mr. Gavras stressed that BSTDB signed several agreements with EC, EBRD and other major financial institutions. However, the activities of the BSTDB can finance only bankable project. He also proposed to apply to external partners for funding and to encourage some Member-States to finance some actions or to lobby interests of the BSEC in other financial organizations.

INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS OF BSEC-EU INTERACTION

The participants presented their views on the existing EU subregional and country specific programs and instruments and discussed the merits of a structured regional BSEC-EU cooperative dimension.

Alternate Director General Amb. Celac expressed three possible ways of institutionalization of the BSEC-EU dialogue through:

- Launching the BSEC-EU cooperation dialogue at the grass-root level in all the organs of the BSEC structure: working groups, BSTDB, Business Council;
- Organization of sectoral Ministerial meetings;

- Specialization of the of the Deputy Secretaries General to follow up BSEC-EU dialogue
- Establishing link with the European institutions: DG for External Relations, Council of the European Union and network of counterparts;
- Promotion of the observer status for the EU in the BSEC.

Mrs. Steafana Greavu from the BSEC PERMIS added a proposal to invite representatives of the European Commission to participate in the work of each specific working groups in the framework of the aforementioned clusters.

Mr. Akin (The Republic of Turkey) stressing the necessity to define strong political will for the BSEC cause, proposed to launch high-level political dialogue through regular ministerial meetings of the Black Sea – EU Partnership. Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona process), NATO's Euro-Atlantic Partnership could be possible models for this process, with possible ministerial meeting held once a year. **Representative of the Republic of Bulgaria Theodoros Rusinov** supported the idea of the Turkish representative.

Representing Republic of Moldova V.Pituscan described the following possible mechanism of institutionalizing BSEC-EU relations:

- Officializing the EU status, inviting EU to apply for observer-status;
- Joint Commission similar to that established in the framework of the CEI-EU as a possible mechanism, except from the Northern Dimension, Barcelona process,
- Inviting the European Commission to start discussion of updated version of Communication between the BSEC and EU taking into account the changes that have taken place since 1997.

He also proposed that European Commission nominate a formal contact point for more efficient communication between the BSEC and the EU.

Mr. Razvan Rusu (Romania) proposed that Commission while elaborating the country Action Plans in the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy introduce specific chapters on the regional cooperation in the region of the Black Sea which would enable BSEC to apply for financing of regional cooperation programs.

Representative of Ukraine Mr. Ihor Yeremenko analyzed prospects of the institutional cooperation BSEC/BSTDB-EBRD/EU.

Alternate Director General of ICBSS Amb. Celac suggested to think over the idea of initiation of **regular consultations of the missions and offices of BSEC Member States in Brussels** about once in a semester and mechanism of information sharing. This idea was supported by the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General and representative of Moldova V.Pituscan, who proposed also to charge some of the Member States initiate lobbying interests of the BSEC within the Commission through organizing meeting with Commissioner Ferero Valdner as well as at the middle level of the European bureaucracy in order to raise awareness of international actors of the BSEC.

THE OUTLINE OF A DRAFT WORKING PAPER

Republic Turkey, Romania and the Hellenic Republics suggested that participants submit written proposals about the subject of this meeting and outline of the paper and task the ICBSS to draft the outline of the Working Paper. This idea was supported by all representatives of the BSEC Member-States. The Member States were supposed to submit their written inputs on the paper structure as well as other proposals at a later stage.