



ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Permanent International Secretariat

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE COORDINATION MEETING OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON “BSEC CORONAVIRUS PROTOCOLS” IN TOURISM OF THE INTERESTED MEMBER STATES

28 September 2020, online

1. The *BSEC Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS)* hosted an online meeting of the ad hoc Working Group on “BSEC Coronavirus Protocols” in Tourism on September 28, 2020; representatives from interested BSEC Member States continued the discussion opened on June 11, 2020 during their first video - meeting on the elaboration and possible agreement on a common platform – framework of measures and actions for a safe and gradual recovery of Tourism activities in the BSEC region. To that end, PERMIS prepared and distributed among Member States the “*BSEC Roadmap towards Facilitating the Gradual Flow of Tourism between Interested Member States*” – a draft plan that offers a safe and responsible road to relaunch travel and tourism among the interested Member States.
2. The meeting was held at the initiative of the BSEC PERMIS under the Romanian Chairmanship-in-Office and the Country – Coordination of the Working Group on Cooperation in Tourism.
3. The meeting was attended by representatives from the following BSEC Member States:
 1. Republic of Armenia
 2. Republic of Azerbaijan
 3. Hellenic Republic
 4. Republic of Moldova
 5. Romania
 6. Russian Federation
 7. Republic of Turkey
 8. Ukraine
4. Representative of the UN *World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)*, a BSEC Sectoral Dialogue Partner, also participated the Meeting.
5. The List of Participants is attached as **Annex I**.
6. On behalf of the Romanian Coordination of the Working Group on Cooperation in Tourism, Mr. Laurențiu CIUTURĂ, Counsellor, Tourism International Relations and European Affairs Office, Ministry of Economy, Energy and Business Environment of Romania, welcomed the above BSEC PERMIS initiative and confirmed the readiness to cooperate in order to identify effective ways to restart Tourism flows among the BSEC Member States.

7. In his opening remarks the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES recalled the conclusions of the recent online informal CMFA meeting, in which Ministers strongly supported the BSEC PERMIS initiative to promote a new cooperation platform in Tourism and called for more cooperation and coordination in this regard. He outlined the “*BSEC Roadmap towards Facilitating the Gradual Flow of Tourism between Interested Member States*”, prepared by PERMIS, in cooperation with the UNWTO, to serve as inspiration for the elaboration of potential “BSEC Coronavirus Protocols”. In this context, the experience that our Member States have already collected internally and by adhering to the international regulations and protocols should also facilitate the work of the ad hoc Working Group, that practically only has to tailor the existing measures and recommendations to the needs of the BSEC Member States. Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES invited the participants to come up with concrete and tangible results in that direction.

8. Mr. Peter JANECH, Deputy Director, Regional Department for Europe, UNWTO, provided the latest information on impact of Covid-19 outbreak on Tourism and briefed on the “Landmark UN Policy: Covid-19 and Transforming Tourism” delivered by the UN Secretary-General H.E. Mr. António GUTERRES. He presented UNWTO “Priorities for Tourism Recovery” and “Recommendations for Actions” (attached as **Annex II**).

9. Furthermore, Mr. Peter JANECH reaffirmed UNWTO’s support in promoting the new BSEC cooperation platform – possible “BSEC Coronavirus Protocols” and provided useful advice and guidance to that effect. He listed crucial areas for the better coordination among the BSEC Member States with regard to Covid-19 measures in efforts to eliminate uncertainty and restore safe travel:

- Common criteria and understanding (data and knowledge) for Introduction of travel restrictions
- Clear policy measures for travelers from various countries
- Health and safety protocols
- Testing, potential quarantine rules, masks, etc.
- Potential common BSEC information platform – web database (timely and regular updates). He also put forward a proposal to work on a joint declaration /manifesto expressing the political support of the Member States for the promotion of Tourism in the Covid-19 pandemic period.

10. The participants exchanged views and discussed proposals and requirements concerning the proposed BSEC cooperation platform – possible “BSEC Coronavirus Protocols”. They acknowledged that the recent resurgence of infection cases urges for more cooperation and coordination among the Member States to find the ways to support Tourism and help it recover, as it contributes greatly to the region’s GDP and is strongly connected to many other industries.

11. Representatives from the 8 participating BSEC Member States (*Armenia, Azerbaijan, Hellenic Republic, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine*) unanimously supported the creation of an online information platform covering the latest regulations and measures adopted by each country in the context of traveling under the “new Tourism norm”. In this regard, participants stressed the importance of exchanging information and good practices in combating the pandemic in a timely, responsible and coordinated manner, thus enabling the gradual and safe reopening of Tourism among the BSEC Member States.

12. The importance of restoring confidence among the travelers was also underlined by offering them necessary assurance for the safe resumption of Tourism, through coordinated actions and promotional campaigns in the interested BSEC Member States. To this end, the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General appealed to all the Member States to give to this initiative the greatest possible visibility.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE MEETING

- In order to achieve the above, the BSEC PERMIS will take the initiative to collect information related to the Covid-19 regulations and measures from the Member States. For this purpose, and in order to gather comparable data, PERMIS will prepare a Questionnaire; the Member States will be invited to complete and submit the Questionnaire on the above national measures to the BSEC PERMIS, so that it can be included in the web-based registry.
- The representatives (experts) from the ad hoc Working Group will cooperate closely to take appropriate actions and will meet again (online or in-person) in the near future, with a view to formulating potential “BSEC Coronavirus Protocols”.
- Proposal for drafting a declaration - BSEC platform for the promotion of Tourism in the Covid-19 pandemic period will be further discussed and coordinated among the Member States.
- Given the importance of the above initiative, the esteemed Member States that have not yet designated their representatives to the ad hoc Working Group, are kindly invited to do so and to send to the PERMIS the contact details of their delegates as soon as possible.