



ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Permanent International Secretariat

BS/WGCT/R(2023)1

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE BSEC WORKING GROUP ON COOPERATION IN TOURISM

Online, 25 October 2023

1. The Meeting of the BSEC Working Group on Cooperation in Tourism was held online on 25 October 2023.
2. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Jalil MALIKOV, Deputy Chief of Administration, Head of International Relations Department, State Tourism Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan.
3. Opening remarks were made by the BSEC PERMIS Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dimitrios RALLIS on behalf of Secretariat and Mr. Jalil MALIKOV on behalf of Country-Coordinator.
4. The Meeting was attended by the representatives of the following BSEC Member States:
 - Republic of Armenia
 - Republic of Azerbaijan
 - Georgia
 - Hellenic Republic
 - Republic of Moldova
 - Romania
 - Russian Federation
 - Republic of Serbia
 - Republic of Türkiye
 - Ukraine
5. The representative of the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) attended the meeting as the BSEC Related Body.
6. The following BSEC Sectoral Dialogue Partners attended the Meeting:
 - Islamic Republic of Iran
 - World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)
 - Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR).
7. The List of Participants is attached as **Annex I** to the present Report.

AGENDA ITEM 1: ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

8. The Draft Agenda of the Meeting was discussed and adopted. The Agenda, as adopted, is attached as **Annex II**.

AGENDA ITEM 2: STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTIONS, DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BSEC COUNCIL AND FOLLOW-UP OF THE DECLARATIONS AND JOINT STATEMENTS ADOPTED BY THE MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF TOURISM OF THE BSEC MEMBER STATES

9. Within this agenda item, the BSEC PERMIS informed on the latest developments with regard to the process of updating the “BSEC Economic Agenda” and, in that respect, welcomed the active participation of the Member States in the development and drafting of the above document.

10. In addition, the Working Group took note of the information provided by the BSEC PERMIS on the state of affairs regarding the latter’s cooperation with the Secretariat of the *United Nations World Tourism Organization* (UNWTO), based on the relevant Memorandum of Understanding and the Sectoral Dialogue Partnership status of the UNWTO in BSEC. In this context, information was provided regarding the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General participation in the 25th session of the UNWTO General Assembly in Samarkand (Uzbekistan), October 16-20, 2023.

11. Furthermore, the BSEC PERMIS briefed regarding the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General participation in the Annual Statutory Meeting of the Governing Board of the *Enlarged Partial Agreement* (EPA) on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe in Luxembourg on May 10, 2023.

AGENDA ITEM 3: PRESENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE PERIOD OF 1 JANUARY 2023 – 31 DECEMBER 2024 DEVELOPED BY THE STATE TOURISM AGENCY OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN, THE CURRENT COUNTRY-COORDINATOR OF THE WORKING GROUP

12. The Working Group discussed and considered the draft Action Plan, elaborated and presented by the Republic of Azerbaijan, as the Country-Coordinator of the Working Group on Cooperation in Tourism for the period of 1 January 2023 – 31 December 2024.

13. The participants decided to finalize its adoption at the next meeting of the Working Group. In order to facilitate further work on the above document, interested Member States were invited to send their written proposals before November 30, 2023 to the Secretariat.

14. The Plan of Action, which is open for further concrete ideas and proposals, is attached as **Annex III**.

AGENDA ITEM 4: “FROM CRISES TO TRANSFORMATION”: EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS, PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND BEST PRACTICES IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM SECTOR IN THE BSEC MEMBER STATES – EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION AND DRAWING CONCRETE LINES OF ACTION

15. In this regard, the participants updated on recent developments in their respective Countries and provided a comprehensive overview of the initiatives and activities of their relevant Ministries and Agencies that have been implemented to reinforce their compliance with the evolving demands of the global tourism market and better support sustainable development.

16. All the presentations and statements provided by the Member States, namely the Republic of Armenia, the Hellenic Republic, Ukraine and the Russian Federation, under this Agenda item are attached to the Report as **Annex IV, V, VI and VII**.

17. Furthermore, the representative of the UNWTO, while reaffirming their readiness to enhance cooperation with the BSEC WG on Cooperation in Tourism, briefed on the main results and outcomes of the 25th session of the UNWTO General Assembly in Samarkand (October 16-20, 2023).

18. The delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan informed that Azerbaijan was elected as a member of the UNWTO Executive Council for the period 2023-2025, in the context of an additional platform for cooperation and knowledge sharing among the BSEC Member States.

AGENDA ITEM 5: EXIBITIONS, TOURISM FAIRS AND OTHER EVENTS WITH REGARD TO DIFFERENT TYPES OF TOURISM

19. The delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan informed about the upcoming *Grape and Wine Festival*, which will be held in Shamakhi on November 25-26, 2023 and invited the interested Member States to participate.

20. In this context, the BSEC PERMIS informed about the initiative to promote culinary tradition and intangible heritage of the BSEC Member States by organizing a gastronomy and wine festival: “*Celebrating Culinary Tradition and Vine culture in the Black Sea region, from Antiquity to the Present,*” to be jointly organized with the Hellenic Ministry of Culture in the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki during May next year; the relevant concept and program will be provided in a timely manner.

AGENDA ITEM 6: COOPERATION WITH REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND PARTNERS

21. The presentation provided by the representative of the *International Centre for Black Sea Studies* (ICBSS) on their flagship projects and activities, as well as the results of research conducted in the period since the last meeting of the Working Group is attached to the Report as **Annex VIII**.

22. The Working Group took note of the information delivered by the representative of the *Balkan and Black Sea Commission* (BBSC) of the *Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe* (CPMR); the presentation is attached as **Annex IX**.

23. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran shared information regarding the promotion of Iran's *Cuisine and Gastronomy*, as well as the upcoming *International Tourism Exhibition* to be held in Iran in February 2024.

AGENDA ITEM 6: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

24. No discussion was held under this agenda item.

AGENDA ITEM 7: ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING

26. The Working Group on Cooperation in Tourism adopted the present Report for its submission to the next Meeting of the BSEC Committee of Senior Officials.