

News from the Black Sea

Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation

Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS)

BSEC

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**Dear Readers,**

We have the pleasure to present to you the 27th issue of our “Newsletter”, which provides a brief overview on the latest activities and developments in BSEC and the region.

BSEC recently completed a fruitful semester under the guidance of the Albanian Chairmanship-in-Office (CiO) that covered 1 January - 30 June 2024 period. A series of productive meetings of BSEC working groups, seminars and workshops were held during this period. Drawing there upon, the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) which met twice (in April

and June), and then the 48th Meeting of the BSEC Council of Ministers (CMFA) organized on 28 June agreed on respectively adopted important decisions aimed at further strengthening the economic cooperation in the region. The establishment of a mechanism for the implementation of the new/revised BSEC Economic Agenda is most relevant in this respect, as are the decision on the operationalization of the Project Development Fund, the conclusion of the Partnership Agreement with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), or the Letter of Intent on Cooperation between the BSEC PERMIS and the Iter Vitis Federation. The project-oriented dimension of the activity of BSEC was thus further enhanced.

I seize this opportunity to thank once again the Albanian Chairmanship for their able chairing and warmly welcome the Armenian Chairmanship-in-Office, under which, I am confident, our Organization will make further and significant advancements in fulfilling its objectives.

Dear Readers,

BSEC Organization celebrates this year its 32nd Anniversary (BSEC Day 25 June). It is the only full-fledged Organization that covers the wider Black Sea region, expanding from the Balkans to the Caucasus, and asserted itself as a most useful platform for regional economic cooperation and dialogue. Together with its Related Bodies and in close cooperation with its Member States, Observers, Sectoral Dialogue Partners, and other regional and international partners, BSEC will continue to work intensively to the benefit of the Wider Black Sea region and beyond.

As Secretary General of this unique Organization, I would like to use this opportunity to sincerely thank all parties who have helped BSEC pave its way to its well-deserved place on the international arena.

Last but not least, BSEC PERMIS staff and I wish you happy summer days with close ones, while staying tuned with us via BSEC website and social media accounts!

Ambassador Lazar Comanescu
Secretary General

HEADLINES

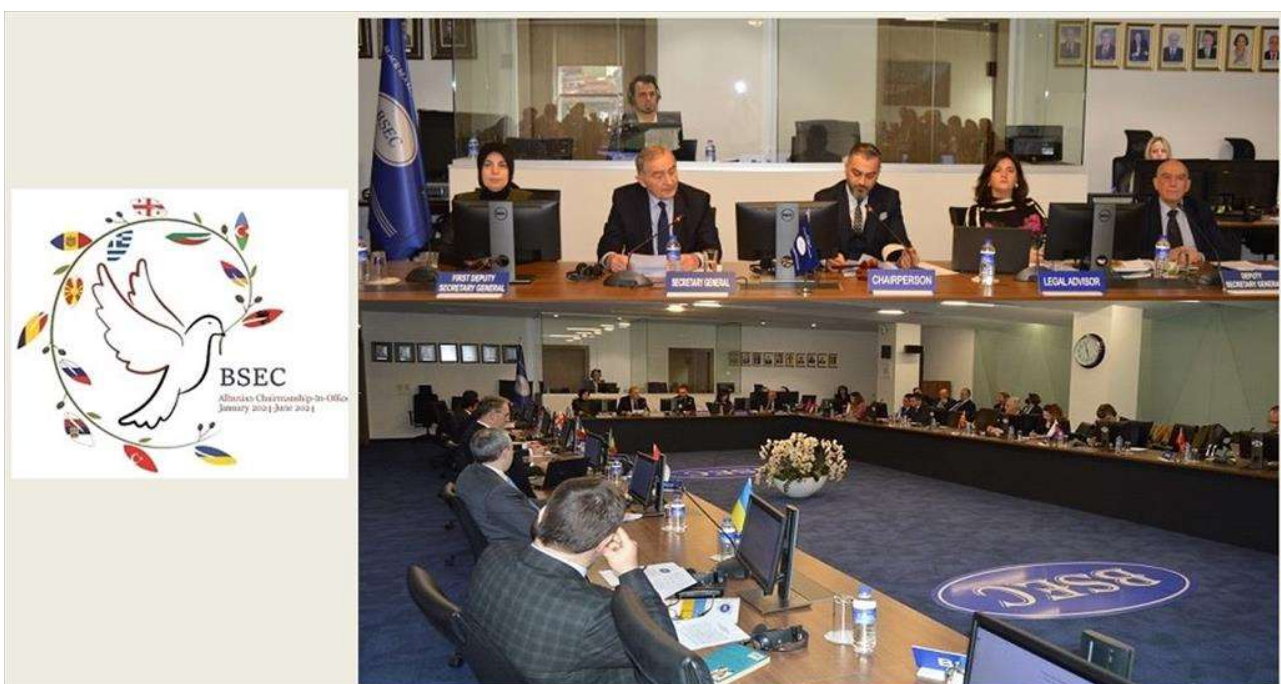
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IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The Forty-eighth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (CMFA) of the BSEC Member States was held online on 28 June 2024. H.E. Mr. Igli Hasani, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania and BSEC Chairman-in-Office, chaired the Meeting.

During the debates, the Ministers made statements on issues regarding the latest developments in the region and within the Organization. They expressed their high appreciation to the Republic of Albania for its successful Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC.

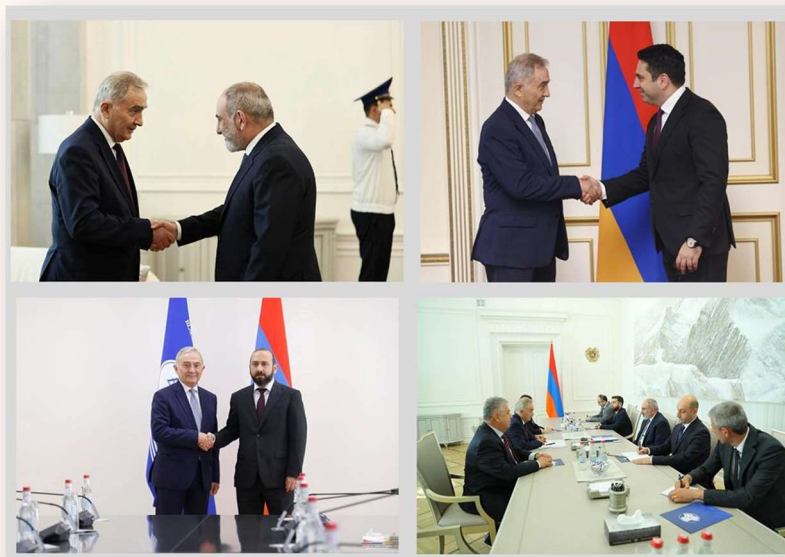
The Council adopted several Resolutions, Decisions and Recommendations related to the topics discussed, and the Meeting was concluded with the transfer of the Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC to the Republic of Armenia for the period of 1 July - 31 December 2024.



WORKING VISITS

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu visited Yerevan on 30 June - 1 July 2024, in the context of the assumption by Armenia of the BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office (CiO). He was received by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia H.E. Mr. Nikol Pashinyan, President of the National Assembly H.E. Mr. Alen Simonyan, and Minister of Foreign Affairs and BSEC Chairman-in-Office H.E. Mr. Ararat Mirzoyan.

During the visit, views were exchanged on developments and challenges in the BSEC region. Ambassador Comanescu briefed his interlocutors on the activities of the Organization. The Armenian side, in return, emphasized on the role of BSEC in promoting economic cooperation and the fact that enhancing connectivity between the Member States is of particular importance and therefore, represent a top priority for the Armenian Chairmanship.



BSEC WORKING GROUPS/STEERING COMMITTEES

During the period covered by this Newsletter, the BSEC PERMIS also held a number of Working Group meetings covering such areas of cooperation as Budgetary and Financial Issues, Education, Exchange of Statistical Data and Economic Information, Institutional Renewal and Good Governance, Science and Technology, and Tourism.

KEY EVENTS

63rd Plenary Session of the PABSEC General Assembly

The 63rd Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC) was held in Tirana on 14-15 May 2024.

The main topic debated was “Strengthening Regional Economic Cooperation to Enhance Encountering Common Security Challenges”.

In his intervention, BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu informed about BSEC’s activities, with focus on the Updated BSEC Economic Agenda and the BSEC Project Development Fund. He also

highlighted the importance, especially under the current challenges, of appropriate coordination among the BSEC family institutions in promoting economic cooperation and development in the region.



PABSEC Committee for Legal Affairs and International Cooperation

BSEC PERMIS First Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dr. Merve Kavakcı, and Legal Advisor Ms. Nino Kajaia participated in the 63rd Meeting of the PABSEC Committee for Legal Affairs and International Cooperation held in Kachreti (Georgia) on 20-21 April 2024.

Main topics consisted of the elections of the Leadership of the Committee, as well as discussions on the “The Role of Parliaments in Promoting Intercultural Dialogue and Tolerance in the Fight Against Hate Speech”.

Ambassador Kavakcı informed the participants on the achievements in the last six months of the BSEC Organization, and

while underlining the importance of the coordination between PABSEC and BSEC, mentioned that it is aimed at better coordinating efforts to enhance the regional cooperation in the BSEC area both at governmental and parliamentary levels.



43rd Meeting of the BSEC-URTA General Assembly

BSEC PERMIS participated in the 43rd Meeting of the BSEC-URTA General Assembly, held in Tirana on 19 April 2024, hosted by the Association of Albanian Enterprises for International Road Transport (ANALTIR).

During the Assembly, BSEC PERMIS Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dimitrios Rallis, stressed that the many years of fruitful cooperation of BSEC with the IRU, BSEC-URTA and their member associations - are the most convincing evidence of their joint efforts to better promote trade and transports in the BSEC Region. He underlined that increased attention should be paid today to the promotion of joint control procedures reducing waiting time for vehicles at national border crossing points (BCPs) and facilitating customs checks; introduction of e-Permit, e-TIR, e-CMR, e-Visa for professional drivers and other innovative tools facilitating trade and transportation.

The General Assembly evaluated the BSEC-URTA activities since its previous Meeting, discussed border-crossing problems, Black Sea Ro-Ro solutions, as well as services offered to the road transport operators.



ITF 2024 Annual Summit

Upon the invitation by the Lithuanian Presidency of the International Transport Forum (ITF) and of the ITF Secretary General, BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu, participated in the ITF Annual Summit, held in Leipzig on 22 - 24 May 2024.

The main topic of the Summit was Greening Transport. Particular attention was given, in this context, to how decision-makers can maintain a long-term policy focus while using opportunities such as cleaner and automated vehicles, as well as advancements in mobility,

logistics and digital solutions to promote a greener, accessible, and more resilient transport sector.

Addressing the Open Ministerial Session of the Summit, Ambassador Comanescu referred to BSEC's activities and objectives in the area of transport, highlighting the particular attention given to environment and climate related issues.

He reiterated in this context the need for coordinated efforts and political will of governments to adjust their transport policies in line with new demands and to increase the capacity of countries in dealing with the climate change challenges.



BSEC and UNOPS Sign Agreement to Accelerate Black Sea SDGs

The Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) signed a Partnership Agreement in Vienna on 9 May 2024, which establishes a framework for collaboration on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across the Black Sea region.



OTHER EVENTS

9th Edition of the Delphi Forum

The 9th Edition of the Delphi Forum took place in Delphi on 10-13 April 2024, covering a large number of topics with focus on current regional and global challenges, developments, trends and prospects for the future.

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu, who was invited to the Forum as speaker in the panel “EU Western Balkans accession: from political reluctance to strategic urgency”, highlighted the interest in and attention BSEC is paying to developments in the Western Balkans, having particularly in mind that three of the BSEC Member States are also EU Members. He elaborated in this context on the importance of further strengthening BSEC-EU interaction and cooperation for their mutual benefit. He also stressed the need of better synergies and correlation with the other regional organizations/formats of cooperation as a win-win process aiming complementarity and mutual reinforcement.



9th Our Ocean Conference (OOC)

Invited by the Minister of Environment and Energy of the Hellenic Republic, H.E. Mr. Theodoros Skylakakis, BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated as speaker in the “9th Our Ocean Conference” (OOC) organized in Athens on 15-17 April 2024.

The Conference’s main aim was to mobilize and engage all involved players towards creating new standards for the protection of seas and oceans and reaffirm the commitment towards a sustainable blue economy, balanced economic growth, protection of the marine environment and biodiversity, with focus inter alia on sustainable tourism, green shipping, marine and microplastic pollution as well as green transition.

Secretary General Comanescu was speaker in the High-Level Panel for Heads of Delegations dedicated to the protection of marine biodiversity. Stressing the fact that BSEC has been giving particular attention to marine issues and activities carried out there for, he mentioned some main joint projects developed so far (the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for the Black Sea- SRIA, the Black Sea Virtual Knowledge Center BSVKC, the Strategic Research, the Black Sea Connect, ARSINOE, etc.), and stressed that all BSEC endeavors are in line with the Common Maritime Agenda.



Meeting of Higher Education Institutions Specialized in Tourism Education in the BSEC region

The First Meeting of Higher Education Institutions Specialized in Tourism Education in the BSEC region, took place in Baku on 22-23 April 2024.

Carried out across several thematic panels as well as in a round table on future cooperation in tourism in the BSEC region, the debates focused on the most pressing challenges facing tourism. The participants of the Meeting underscored the pivotal role of education in shaping the future trajectory of the tourism industry. Further on, they adopted the “Baku Statement on Strengthening Cooperation and Networking to Enhance Tourism Education in the BSEC region”.

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General, Ambassador Lazar Comanescu pointed out at the huge touristic potential of the BSEC Region and the need of making the best use of it. He further added that a significant contribution would be in this respect networking and sharing good practices and lessons learned, and exploring new opportunities for regional partnerships and synergies.



Navigating New Horizons: Digital Diplomacy for a Sustainable Future

The Conference on “Navigating New Horizons: Digital Diplomacy for a Sustainable Future” was jointly organized in Barcelona on 24-26 April 2024, by the German Federal Foreign Office, BSEC PERMIS and the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat.

The aim of the Conference, first of this kind, was to bring together leaders, diplomats, experts and stakeholders to engage in discussions on the interface between digital diplomacy and sustainable development.

In his intervention, BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu, informed briefly about the activities of the

Organization and referred to the updated “BSEC Economic Agenda Towards a Sustainable Future of the wider Black Sea area”, and of the fact that digitalization has been given particular attention there in.



RTÜK Meeting on Combating Violence Against Women

The Turkish Radio and Television Supreme Council organized in Ankara on 25 April 2024, a launch meeting to introduce the Ethical Principles Guide prepared within the framework of National Action Plan IV on Combatting Violence Against Women. BSEC welcomes these efforts, condemns violence and believes all forms of violence against women and girls should be eliminated immediately.

BSEC PERMIS was represented at the said meeting by First Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dr. Merve Kavakcı.



Annual meeting of EPA Governing Board

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated in the Annual Meeting of EPA Governing Board held in Luxembourg, on 21-22 May 2024.

The Meeting covered a large number of topics, including the presentation of the Activity Report for 2023 and the Draft Program for the current year, the certification and evaluation of Cultural Routes and candidate networks.

Addressing the Meeting, the Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu, emphasized on the importance of the updated “BSEC Economic Agenda towards a Sustainable Future of the wider Black Sea area”, highlighting the fact that special attention was paid there in to the deepening and promoting of regional cooperation in the field of culture, including the encouragement and further development of cultural tourist routes in the region.

In the margins of the Meeting, a Letter of Intent on Cooperation between the BSEC PERMIS and the Iter Vitis Federation was signed to provide a framework for closer collaboration on the promotion of gastronomy, wine culture and traditions of the wider Black Sea region.



The 27th St. Petersburg International Economic Forum was held on 5-8 June 2024 with the main theme “The Foundation of a Multipolar World – the formation of new areas of growth”. BSEC PERMIS Executive Manager Ambassador Ashot Kocharian attended the Forum and had the opportunity to network and exchange views with participants on issues relevant for BSEC such as energy, regional cooperation, transport, environment, global food security, urban development, as well as tourism and hospitality industry.

Conference on the Growing Importance of the Black Sea

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated as a key note speaker in the conference on the Growing Importance of the Black Sea, jointly organized in Varna on 10-12 June 2024, by Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and Sofia Security Forum.

The Conference discussed developments and challenges in the Black Sea region, with particular emphasis on security related aspects. In his contribution to the debate, the Secretary General concentrated on the importance of the economic dimension of security and of the economic cooperation as key factor in providing predictability and enhancing security.



Annual Meeting of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)

The Annual Meeting of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) was held in Skopje on 12 June 2024. The main purpose of the Meeting was to review progress made by RCC during the past year, exchange views on future steps and endorse its annual report with a view to submitting it to SEECF Ministerial Meeting.

BSEC PERMIS was represented by Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dimitrios Rallis who made an intervention stressing the importance BSEC PERMIS attaches to cooperation with its international and regional interlocutors. He underlined that

economic and security cooperation are interrelated and that economic development constitutes a very important dimension of security and stability.



WEC Central and Eastern Europe Energy Forum – FOREN 2024

BSEC PERMIS Secretary General, Ambassador Lazar Comanescu, and Executive Manager Ambassador Ashot Kocharian, participated in the 17th Edition of the WEC Central and Eastern Europe Energy Forum – FOREN 2024 entitled "Ret-thinking the Future of the World Through a Secured, Clean and Efficient Energy" held in Neptun (Romania) on 16 -19 June 2024.

The Forum included sessions on a just energy transition in CEE countries, energy efficiency, smart consumption and prosumer integration, energy strategies to decarbonize the energy system, new technologies in energy transition as well as the impact of artificial intelligence energy management in the coming decade.

In his address to the Forum, the Secretary General referred to the main activities and objectives of the BSEC Organization in the area

of energy, and stressed the need to appropriately tackle the trilemma: stable energy supply, mitigation of environmental impact and affordability.

Executive Manager Kocharian moderated the session on "Adapting the Energy Sectors of the Countries in the Region to the New Challenges" and participated as panelist, in the session on "Specific Issues on the Use of Fossil Fuels and Biofuels in the Energy Transition".



A delegation from the College of Advanced Studies of the Diplomatic Institute of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the French Republic paid a visit to BSEC Headquarters on 26 June 2024, during which an exchange of views on current developments and regional cooperation in the BSEC region took place with focus on the role of BSEC Organization as a valuable platform for promoting regional cooperation in the wider Black Sea area.



STAY IN THE KNOW

TOURAL PROJECT



Multidimensional model of tourism verticals driving the sustainable balanced growth among rural & remote grids and urban clusters of rural regions, fostering macro-regional cooperation.

Read more: https://toural-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/TOURAL_Newsletter_no1-v1.0.pdf

SAVE THE DATE

- Workshop on “Bridging Gaps in Coastal Restoration: Ecology, Economy, Engineering and Society” within the REST-COAST project to be held in Thessaloniki on 8-9 October 2024.

Read more: <https://www.bsec-bsvkc.org/Forms/Event/eventDetails?targetID=2231>

- 2nd High Tech Summit for the Black Sea within the BRIDGE-BS project to be held in Sofia on 16 October 2024.

Read more: <https://www.bsec-bsvkc.org/Forms/Event/eventDetails?targetID=2225>



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