

# News from the Black Sea

## Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation

Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS)



PERMANENT INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT (PERMIS)



### **Message of the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu**

**Dear Readers,**

We have the pleasure to share with you in this 22<sup>nd</sup> issue of our "Newsletter", updates on the BSEC activities and our region.

BSEC started the new year under the guidance of the Serbian Chairmanship-in-Office (CIO) which will cover the period between 1 January to 30 June 2023. CIO's priorities as well as the calendar of events were presented at the Coordination Meeting which took place online on 31 January 2023. You may find more details there upon in the section dedicated to this event.



2022 was a most challenging year for our Organization, given primarily the unfortunate developments in the Black Sea area, notably the war in Ukraine, but 2023 as well tests us in many ways. While striving to overcome the impact of this war, we were shocked by the two apocalyptic earthquakes that struck the south east of Republic of Türkiye and the neighboring country Syria on 6 February and caused immense damages and losses of lives. The impact of this worst natural disaster in a century will be long felt. As an act of solidarity and as a symbolic contribution to help heal those in need, the BSEC PERMIS donated € 50,000 to host country Türkiye. Another sad news that broke our hearts was the terrible collision between passenger and cargo trains which happened near the Tempe valley (Greece) and caused numerous human casualties. We once more reiterate herewith our sincere condolences to the families of the victims in both Türkiye and Greece.

**Dear Readers,**

There are also good things worth mentioning here. After almost three years, we managed to come back to in person meetings of BSEC bodies and subsidiary organs, and through this to a more efficient conduct of our work. BSEC was represented and actively participated in several important international events that took place in the first quarter of 2023. We commemorated in February the International Day of Human Fraternity proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2020. While welcoming this commemoration we reaffirmed our commitment to promoting a culture of peace, tolerance, inclusion, understanding and solidarity, towards fulfilling a world of “One Humanity, Many Cultures”.

The International Women’s Day was also commemorated. We once more acknowledged the highly valuable contribution women have in our life. We believe in gender equality and are convinced that women’s right is essential for global progress. With their unconditional love, motivation, leadership, and many more talents, they are an inspiration to us all. We wish a happy International Women’s Day to our lady readers!

While hoping you enjoy the Newsletter, stay tuned with us via BSEC website and social media accounts: <http://www.bsec-organization.org>  
<https://www.facebook.com/BSECPERMIS>  
[https://www.instagram.com/bsec\\_organization/](https://www.instagram.com/bsec_organization/)  
<https://twitter.com/BSECorg>

***Ambassador Lazar Comanescu***

## HEADLINES

- **Coordination Meeting of the Serbian BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office with the BSEC Committee of Senior Officials, the BSEC Related Bodies and the BSEC PERMIS**
- **BSEC Troika**
- **Working and courtesy visits**
- **Other events and meetings organized and attended by the BSEC PERMIS**
- **Visit of BSEC PERMIS officials to the epicenter of the earthquake - Kahramanmaraş**

## Coordination Meeting of the Serbian BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office with the BSEC Committee of Senior Officials, the BSEC Related Bodies and the BSEC PERMIS



The Coordination Meeting, the first official one under the Serbian Chairmanship, was held online on 31 January 2023 and chaired by Ambassador Sanja Milinkovic, Department for Multilateral Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

In his opening remarks, the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu warmly congratulated the Serbian Chairmanship and conveyed to it the best wishes. He reassured of PERMIS's readiness and commitment to fully support and closely collaborate with the Chairmanship in fulfilling their mandate.

Ambassador Milan Milanovic, Acting Assistant Minister, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia presented the Priorities of the Serbian BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office (1 January – 30 June 2023), stressing that it will focus on achievable, practical and visible objectives so as to contribute to the sustainable development of the wider Black Sea Region. Updating the BSEC Economic Agenda, improving the effectiveness of the work of the BSEC, including the reactivation of the BSEC Business Council and making more use of the BSEC Troika mechanism as well as of informal consultations are some of the priorities. For more information, please visit <http://www.bsec-organization.org/chairmanship>.

## BSEC TROIKA Meeting

A working meeting of the BSEC Troika was held upon the initiative of the Serbian Chairmanship-in-Office and of the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu, on 3 March 2023 at the BSEC Headquarters.

The Meeting, the first of this kind since year 2017, was chaired by Ambassador Sanja Milinkovic, Department for Multilateral Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia and attended by the representatives of the Republic of Moldova, the Republic of Türkiye, and the BSEC PERMIS. Updating the BSEC Economic Agenda, improving the effectiveness of the work of the BSEC, including the reactivation of the BSEC Business Council and making more use of the BSEC Troika mechanism, encouraging more active involvement and contributions from Observers and Sectoral Dialogue Partners to the activities of the Organization, the finalization of the draft Framework of the Single Window, and the draft Regional Trade Facilitation Strategy for the BSEC Region, were among the issues discussed.

A message of condolences and solidarity with the Republic of Türkiye on the highly devastating earthquakes, and the Hellenic Republic on the tragic train accident, was also conveyed by the participants at the beginning of the Troika Meeting.





## WORKING AND COURTESY VISITS

**The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu continued to pay working visits to a number of capitals of the BSEC Member States.**

### Working visit to Ankara



Minister of Foreign Affairs and Director for EU Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye on 31 March 2023 in Ankara.

An exchange of views took place on this occasion on the current developments in BSEC region, including on upcoming meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials of the Member States. The importance of updating the BSEC Economic Agenda and the need of the revitalization of the BSEC Business Council were highlighted in this context. The issues of granting/renewal of Observer respectively SDP status to several countries and organizations, as well as close interaction in the perspective of the exercising by Türkiye of the BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office in the second half of 2023 were discussed too.

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu met with Ambassador Mehmet Kemal Bozay, Deputy

**The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu received several visitors during the period covered by this edition.**

*Visit by the Secretary General of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), Ambassador Kubanychbek Omuraliev, 27 January 2023.*



*Visit by the Ambassador of the Republic of North Macedonia to the Republic of Türkiye, H.E. Mr. Jovan Manasijevski, 8 February 2023.*



***Visit by the Director General for Multilateral and International Economic Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari, 17 February 2023.***



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## **OTHER EVENTS AND MEETINGS ORGANIZED AND ATTENDED BY THE BSEC PERMIS**

### **BSEC WORKING GROUPS**

During the period covered by this Newsletter, the BSEC PERMIS also held a number of Working Group meetings covering such areas as Culture, Budgetary and Financial Issues, Organizational and Legal Matters.

For more events during the Serbian Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC please visit:

<http://www.bsec-organization.org/events>

### **Black Sea Security Conference**



Upon invitation by the Center for Science and Commercial Diplomacy (CSCD), the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated, via video as keynote speaker, in the Black Sea Security Conference held in the Danish Parliament (Copenhagen) on 12 January 2023.

The Conference brought together prominent members of parliament, ambassadors/other diplomats, governmental, civil society and business representatives, as well as experts, to

exchange views on challenges and opportunities in the wider Black Sea Region and their implications for various aspects of Black Sea and broader European security. In his address to the participants, Ambassador Comanescu, while referring to the current unfortunate developments in the Black Sea Region, particularly the war in Ukraine, and their impact which goes beyond the BSEC area, stressed the importance of and focused on the economic dimension of security, especially in terms of trade and security of trade flows, energy and food security, and migration. He highlighted in this context, the role and efforts of BSEC in promoting economic cooperation and integration as a key not only to bringing benefits in terms of prosperity, but also to enhancing stability, mutual understanding and good neighbourly relations - that is security.

## ENVIROMENTAL/MARITIME ISSUES

### **Black Sea Case Study Technical Meeting (ARSINOE Project)**

The BSEC PERMIS hosted the Black Sea Case Study Technical Meeting within "Climate Resilient-regions through system solutions and innovations - ARSINOE" project, on 13-14 February 2023 in Istanbul.

The Black Sea Case Study is focusing mostly on the connection between upstream land uses and the coastal and marine ecosystems of the sea, including the Danube delta, as well as developing a series of innovative approaches. The two-day technical meeting was dedicated to the presentation of the results already achieved within the Black Sea Case Study, as well as to the consideration of the way forward. Cooperation and exchange of good practices with other regional projects like BRIDGE-BS have been also touched upon.

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu expressed the readiness and willingness of the Secretariat to continue supporting the implementation of projects like ARSINOE, which contribute to the goals and principles of the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) and the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea (CMA), both developed and endorsed (2019) by the BSEC Member States and with the active participation of the BSEC PERMIS.





### Science-Policy Dialog Forum for a Sustainable Blue Economy in the Black Sea

The Science-Policy Dialog Forum for a Sustainable Blue Economy in the Black Sea, organized under the Horizon 2020-funded BRIDGE-BS project by the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS), was held in Thessaloniki on 29 March 2023.

The event brought together scientists and policy-makers from the Black Sea region to exchange key cross-cutting issues in established and emerging blue economy sectors in the Black Sea. The discussions focused on multiple stressors on the Black Sea ecosystem, innovation and entrepreneurship, and capacity building and skills in order to enable a constructive science-policy dialogue based on actual needs and priorities.

As partner of the "BRIDGE-BS: Advancing Black Sea Research and Innovation to Co-Develop Blue Growth within Resilient Ecosystems" project consortium, the BSEC PERMIS staff members participated in the event by actively contributing to the discussions, as well as to the organizational aspects of the meeting.



More detailed information about the event and the project itself can be found at <http://bridgeblacksea.org/>

## TRANSPORT

### ITF Annual Consultations



The BSEC PERMIS Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dimitrios Rallis, and Project Coordinator Mr. Sergii Kravchenko, attended online the Annual Consultation with International Organizations, organized by the International Transport Forum (ITF), on 24 January 2023. The consultation brought together key ITF partner organizations from the transport sector and beyond to discuss the most pertinent issues that will be addressed at the forthcoming 2023 Summit on Transport Enabling Sustainable Economies to be held in Leipzig, Germany on 24-26 May 2023.

Ambassador Rallis and Mr. Kravchenko also attended the ITF Consultation on Gender and Transport aimed to discuss the interfaces between gender inequalities in transport and sustainable economic growth and how these issues can be further reflected in the 2023 Summit programme. The meeting provided an opportunity for stakeholders to share their current policy priorities on gender and transport.

## Annual Meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission (IGC) TRACECA



The BSEC PERMIS took part in the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission (IGC) TRACECA, held on 10 February 2023 in Tbilisi, marking both the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary since the establishment of the TRACECA program and the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the signing of the "Basic Multilateral Agreement on International Transport for Development of the Europe-the Caucasus-Asia Corridor" (MLA).

## 85th Session of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee

The BSEC PERMIS participated in the 85th Session of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee (ITC), which took place in Geneva on 21-24 February 2023.

In his statement in the Ministerial segment, the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu highlighted the fact that strengthening cooperation for the protection of the environment has become one of the priorities in the activities of the BSEC Organization, in particular in the sector of transport. He conveyed that the endorsement of the "Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea" by the riparian countries in May 2019, has created a new dynamic in the region and established a platform for the preservation and restoration of the environment for the development of blue and green economies and building a greener and more environmentally friendly transport system.

At the margin of 85th Session of the UNECE ITC, Ambassador Comanescu had a bilateral meeting with Ms. Olga Algayerova, UNECE Executive Secretary, where a fruitful exchange of views took place on the prospects for further enhancing BSEC-UNECE cooperation based on the Cooperation Agreement signed in 2001. He also held meetings with the representatives of other partner transport organizations.

In his statement, BSEC Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dimitrios Rallis emphasized the importance of further strengthening cooperation between BSEC and TRACECA, aimed especially at ensuring the complementarity of their activities.

He underlined the common interest of both organizations in the area of transport, where the potentially joint efforts of BSEC and TRACECA could be of paramount significance for decisively facilitating the transport of goods. In this context, the importance of regional projects, such as the "BSEC Permit System", as well as the widest possible use of digitalized transport documents, were particularly highlighted.

The Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the IGC TRACECA concluded with the adoption of its Final Resolutions.



The High-level policy segment was concluded by the endorsement of the Ministerial Declaration on “Harnessing the Full Potential of Inland Transport Solutions in the Global Fight Against Climate Change”.



### Strengthening Cooperation with BSEC-URTA

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu received the Secretary General of the Union of Road Transport Associations in the BSEC Region (BSEC-URTA) Mr. Mehmet Uylukçu on 27 February 2023. The Secretaries General discussed issues related to the digitalization of transport documents, border-crossing problems in the BSEC region and other important subjects. They reiterated the importance of the BSEC Permit System and the significant results achieved in this field, expressing their hope that the geographical coverage of the Project will be further expanded and the other BSEC Member States will also join the Project in the near future.

Upon invitation by BSEC-URTA, the BSEC PERMIS Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dimitrios Rallis, Project Coordinator Mr. Sergii Kravchenko, and Executive Manager Mr. Kenan Murtuzov, participated on 15 and 21 March 2023 in the online meetings of the BSEC-URTA, devoted, respectively, to the expansion of the geographical coverage of the BSEC Permit System and border crossing facilitation in the BSEC Region.

In its presentation on 15 March the BSEC PERMIS provided detailed information on the history of establishment of the BSEC Permit System, its operational aspects, distribution, and usage of permits in the period of 2010-2023, outcomes of the last Meeting of the BSEC Member States





participating in this project, as well as on prospects of its further development. It was particularly noted that this project became available due to the valuable partnerships of BSEC with IRU, BSEC-URTA and their member associations.

### 10<sup>th</sup> Global Baku Forum

Invited by the Nizami Ganjavi International Center, the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated in the 10<sup>th</sup> Global Baku Forum “The World of Today: Challenges and Hopes”, held in Baku on 8-11 March 2023.

More than 350 participants, including former heads of states/governments, ministers, heads and representatives of international organizations, high level experts and academics attended the Forum.

The Forum organized in several panels, was dedicated to major topics of the current international scene, among which were: building resilience in a divided world; the age of mega threats- climate security, food security, nuclear security; reinventing multilateralism; the role of new energy and transport corridors in the Eurasian zone;

China’s role in the global development and security; the Western Balkans in the EU context; the geostrategic importance of Africa; etc.

During the panel on energy and transport, Ambassador Comanescu emphasized on the importance of the Black Sea region as the real bridge between Europe and Asia, highlighting in this context, the role and activities of the BSEC in the area of both energy and transport.



## 26<sup>th</sup> Eurasian Economic Summit



The 26<sup>th</sup> Eurasian Economic Summit organized in the context of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Republic of Türkiye, took place in Istanbul on 14-15 March 2023, with the participation of former heads of states or governments, ministers, heads, representatives of international organizations, high level experts and academics from 44 countries.

The participants of the Summit exchanged views on several topics such as the energy supply crisis, sustainable economic recovery, disruptions in global supply chains, technology management as well thoughts of youth in the new world order.

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu who participated as a keynote speaker in the Summit, referred to the significance of the celebratory year of 2023 for the Turkish people and highlighted the position of the Republic of Türkiye as a most relevant actor in the region and beyond and its outstanding role as the host country of BSEC in the activity of and support to the Organization. He further elaborated on the topic of the opening session “End the Distrust, Begin the Cooperation” stressing that given the developments at global level and in our region, it has become of urgent necessity to bring back trust and resume the spirit of cooperation which enabled, inter alia, the establishment in 1992, of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. Ambassador Comanescu also briefly referred to important initiatives and projects that have been launched or implemented within BSEC in areas such as trade and development, transport, connectivity, energy and environment, etc.

### Visit of BSEC PERMIS Officials to the Epicenter of the Earthquake - Kahramanmaraş

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu accompanied by First Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Merve Kavakcı and Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dimitrios Rallis visited on 16 March 2023, the city of Kahramanmaraş which was the epicenter of the recent catastrophic earthquakes that hit southeastern Turkey.

During their stay in Kahramanmaraş, the BSEC PERMIS Delegation visited the Karacasu container city where they had the opportunity to get acquainted with the magnitude of the needs and the important challenges linked with them. They visited the Kahramanmaraş United Nations Office where they were briefed on the important coordinating role of humanitarian assistance.

The PERMIS Delegation was received by the Governor of Kahramanmaraş Mr. Ömer Coşkun, and the Mayor of Kahramanmaraş Metropolitan Municipality Mr. Hayrettin Güngör, who informed on the extend of the disaster and the huge efforts exerted to meet the extensive needs that arose from a natural disaster in such an unprecedented scale. Ambassador Lazar Comanescu assured his interlocutors of BSEC's solidarity with the people of these areas and the Turkish authorities in their efforts to overcome the results of this natural disaster. Aid provided by the BSEC Member States was underlined. The BSEC itself provided about 1 million TL (50.000 €) to AFAD and stressed that BSEC would further research ways and means of helping the people to get over with the consequences. The Secretary General expressed appreciation for the way the Turkish Government is handling the situation and expressed confidence that the people will overcome this tragedy and will soon get back to normal mode of living.





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