

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 are now coming back to you with the 23rd issue of our “Newsletter” where through we would gladly like to inform about the latest activities and developments in BSEC and our region.

BSEC enjoyed a fruitful semester under a most effective Serbian Chairmanship-in-Office (CiO) which covered the period between 1 January to 30 June 2023. A series of meetings, including BSEC working groups, seminars, workshops, and last but not least the Committee of senior official and the 46th Meeting of the BSEC Council of Ministers (CMFA) were held during this period with promising results. I take this opportunity to

thank once again the Serbian Chairmanship-in-Office for their able guidance and welcome the Turkish Chairmanship-in-Office, our Host Country, wishing them all the success during the next six months.

June is the Anniversary month of BSEC: the BSEC Day (25 June). 31 years to the day have passed since the establishment of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). As the only full-fledged Organization that covers the wider Black Sea region, expanding from the Balkans to the Caucasus, BSEC asserted itself as a most useful platform for regional economic



cooperation and dialogue to the benefit of its Member States and their citizens. BSEC has achieved much in the three decades of its existence. Together with its Related Bodies and in close cooperation with its Observers, Sectoral Dialogue Partners and other regional and international institutions, our Organization has built up valuable partnerships and accomplished projects of high relevance.

While BSEC is now recognized as a most important actor in our region and beyond, strengthening it further has become a necessity under the current circumstances and even more so when considering the future, including and particularly the need of a swift restoration of peace and stability as a prerequisite of prosperity in our common home of the Black Sea.

As Secretary General of this unique Organization, I would like to renew my thanks to the Member States without whose guidance, support and commitment, BSEC would not have reached its well-deserved place on the international arena. My thanks go also to our observers and partner countries and organizations, with whom we work hand in hand to offer a more sustainable world to the future generations.

Dear Readers,

The BSEC PERMIS staff and myself wish you a joyful and healthy summer with your families and beloved ones. Let the warmth of the season embrace you and don't forget to stay tuned with us via BSEC website and social media accounts!

Ambassador Lazar Comanescu

HEADLINES

- **46th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States (Online, 13 June 2023)**
- **Coordination Meeting of the Turkish BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office**
- **Working and courtesy visits**
- **Other events and meetings organized and attended by the BSEC PERMIS**

46th CMFA



The Forty-sixth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (CMFA) of the BSEC Member States was held online on 13 June 2023 under the Chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Ivica Dacic, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

In addition to the Heads of Delegations of the BSEC Member States, representatives of the BSEC Related Bodies, Observers and Sectoral Dialogue Partners also participated in the Council Meeting.

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu presented a brief overview of the activities and achievements of the Organization during the Serbian Chairmanship (1 January – 30 June 2023). Highlighting BSEC's role as an important actor in our region, he stressed that the need of its further strengthening has become even more evident under the current circumstances, particularly in view of the necessity of a swift restoration of peace and stability as a prerequisite of prosperity in our common home of the Black Sea.

The Ministers made statements on issues regarding the latest developments in the region and within the Organization and expressed their high appreciation to the Republic of Serbia for its successful Chairmanship in Office of BSEC.

The Council adopted Resolutions, Decisions and Recommendations on various issues: including the approval of the new Regulations for the Staff, the new Rules of Procedure, and the new Financial Regulations and Procedures of the Permanent International Secretariat of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation; renewal of Observer as well as Sectoral Dialogue Partnership Status in BSEC; Progress Report of the Secretary General; appointment of country coordinators to working groups; the interaction between BSEC and its Related Bodies; as well as renewal of the term-in-office of the Legal Advisor, two Executive Managers and the creation of a new post of Executive Manager in the BSEC PERMIS.

At the conclusion of the Meeting, the Republic of Serbia handed over the Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC to the Republic of Türkiye which assumes the Chairmanship as of 1 July 2023 until 31 December 2023.

Coordination Meeting of the Turkish BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office



The Coordination Meeting of the Turkish BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office, first official one under the Latter, took place online on 12 July 2023, chaired by Mr. Rauf Denктаş, Deputy Director General, Deputy Directorate General for Multilateral Economic Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye.

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

Deputy Director General Rauf Denктаş presented the Priorities of the Turkish BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office (1 July – 31 December 2023), stressing that their main objective is to ensure the full resumption of collaboration among the Member States despite the present challenges, as well as to focus on less-explored avenues of cooperation that will serve the interests of the peoples of the wider Black Sea region. Updating the BSEC Economic Agenda and approving main cooperation documents, activating the Project Development Fund (PDF), and reactivating the BSEC Business Council are some of these priorities. For full text of the Turkish priorities please visit: <http://www.bsec-organization.org/chairmanship>. The meeting also approved the calendar of events during the Turkish Chairmanship-in-Office: <http://www.bsec-organization.org/events>

WORKING AND COURTESY VISITS

Courtesy visit to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu paid a courtesy visit to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania H.E. Ms. Luminita Odobescu, on 29 June 2023 to congratulate her for the appointment as Minister. Ways to advance economic cooperation and resilience in the Black Sea Region were also discussed.



Working visit by the President of the Black Sea Universities Network (BSUN), Professor Marian Preda and BSUN Secretary General Professor Dr. Eden Mamut, 24 April 2023



Courtesy visit by the Consul General of the Republic of Moldova in Istanbul, Mr. Sergiu Gurduza, 22 May 2023.



Working visit to the Head of Mission of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Mr. Achraf Boual, 7 June 2023.



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 Education, Institutional Renewal and Good Governance, Trade and Economic Development, and Transport.

61st General Assembly of PABSEC

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC) held its 61st General Assembly in Ankara on 4-5 May 2023. The Meeting was organized by the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye and was attended by the members of the national delegations to the PABSEC, representatives of BSTDB, BSECURTA and PABSEC Observers.

The BSEC PERMIS was represented by Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu, who in his address to the Plenary, elaborated on the activities of BSEC Organization since the last General Assembly in December 2022 in Belgrade. He stressed in this sense the need of continued efforts by

BSEC and BSEC Related Bodies aimed at coping with the challenges the BSEC region is confronted with. In this context he expressed his appreciation for the fruitful cooperation between BSEC PERMIS and PABSEC International Secretariat.



63rd Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors of the BSEC BC

The 63rd BSEC Business Council (BSEC BC) Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors was held online on 1 June 2023, hosted by the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The main topic on the Agenda was “Green transformation – the role of business associations and the economy of BSEC countries in the green transformation”.

The BSEC PERMIS was represented by Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu, who in his opening address, welcomed the resumption of the BSEC BC meetings and emphasized that issues related to the statutory documents, criteria for the affiliated business organizations, organizational aspects of the functioning of the Secretariat/liaison office, website and etc. needs to be urgently dealt with so that Business Council restore its image and capacity as a reliable platform of cooperation for the regional business entities. Ambassador Comanescu expressed his confidence that the dynamism brought up by the outgoing Serbian Chairmanship will be further continued under the forthcoming Turkish Chairmanship.



25th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the BSTDB

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated in the 25th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB) held in Thessaloniki on 5-7 July 2023, where he elaborated mainly on the BSEC's cooperation with BSTDB, highlighting the close and fruitful interaction that has been developed between PERMIS and the management of BSTDB.



CULTURE

Annual Statutory Meeting of the Governing Board of the Enlarged Partial Agreement (EPA)



The Annual Statutory Meeting was held in Luxembourg on 10 May 2023.

Composed of 38 Member States, the EPA Governing Board is the governing body that meets once a year to award the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, examine Cultural Routes under evaluation and candidate networks, and discuss other issues related to their work and activities.

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu, in his address to the meeting, expressed his appreciation for the close cooperation that has been developed between BSEC and EPA and informed the Board on the joint efforts and initiatives promoted and implemented over the last three years. He highlighted the cultural values of the BSEC area and of the role cultural diplomacy has in promoting those values and referred to various authentic cultural routes of the region, briefing the relevant actions of PERMIS in this respect.

On the sidelines of the event, Ambassador Comanescu had a bilateral meeting with the Executive Secretary of the EPA, Mr. Stefano Dominioni where ways and opportunities were discussed to further enhance and expand the very fruitful partnership already established between the two Organizations.

ENVIROMENTAL/MARITIME ISSUES**Danube Basin Lighthouse**

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated in the launch event of the Danube Basin Lighthouse held in Bucharest on 3 April 2023. Lighthouse Projects are hubs and platforms aiming at protecting and restoring the health of our ocean and waters through research and innovation, citizen engagement and blue investments by cross-cutting enabling actions. The Mission supports regional engagement and cooperation through area-based “lighthouses” in major sea/river basins: Atlantic-Arctic, Mediterranean Sea, Baltic-North Sea, and Danube-Black Sea.

During his statement, Ambassador Comanescu laid out the importance of such actions in the Danube River, the most important river that flows into the Black Sea, which is one of the most polluted seas in Europe. He also highlighted the work BSEC is doing for the environment of the Black Sea and its basin, referring to a number of joint projects with the aim of restoring the environment and sustaining the blue and green economies of the region. Highlighting the importance of transport in general also in terms of sustainability and of a climate friendly environment, Ambassador Comanescu stressed the need of a coordinated effort towards transforming the Danube River into a genuine permanent European West-East water transportation corridor, and through the Black Sea into a most efficient Europe-Caucasus-Asia link.

The Black Sea CONNECT General Assembly and the Launch of SRIA Implementation Plan

The Black Sea CONNECT General Assembly and the Launch of the Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation (SRIA) Implementation Plan took place in Brussels on 3 respectively 4 May 2023.

The BSEC PERMIS, partner of the "Black Sea CONNECT: Coordination of Marine and Maritime Research and Innovation in the Black Sea" project consortium, was represented by Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu, who during his address to the participants, highlighted the achievements during the last couple of years in the area of Black Sea research and innovation and the development of synergies and regional cooperation. He underlined at the same time that there is still room and need for more to be done in this respect, especially in terms of concrete joint actions towards productive, healthy, resilient, sustainable and better valued Black Sea.



TRANSPORT

Task Force on Intermodal Transportation



The Meeting of the BSEC Task Force on Intermodal Transportation in the Black Sea Region was held online on 25 April 2023 and brought together experts from the respective Authorities of BSEC Member States and of many international organizations such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the International Road Transport Union (IRU), the Union of Road Transport Associations in the BSEC Region (BSEC-URTA), the Conference of European

Directors of Roads (CEDR), the International Union of Railways (UIC), the Transport Community (TCT) and the Intergovernmental Commission (IGC) TRACECA.

The participants presented recent developments in intermodal transport and logistics in their countries, new government policies and business measures affecting

intermodal transport, discussed practical ways on introduction of advanced technologies responding to the needs of the BSEC region, BSEC cooperation with international organizations in the area, etc. They agreed to continue the practice of reviewing the trends and performance in the intermodal transport and logistics industry in the BSEC region.

BSEC Working Group on Transport

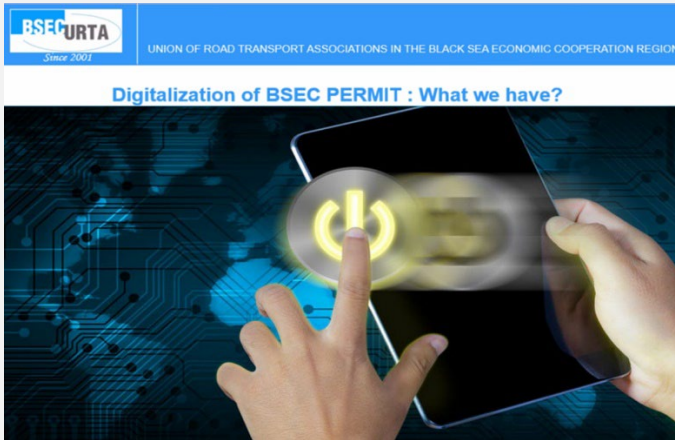


At its online Meeting on 26 April 2023, the Working Group on Transport took note of the Evaluation Report on implementation of the Plan of Action of the BSEC Working Group on Transport for the period of 1 January 2021 – 31 December 2022, as well as approved the Plan of Action for the next two years, presented by Ukraine as the Country-Coordinator.

It also discussed the implementation of the Memoranda of Understanding on the Coordinated Development of the Black Sea Ring Highway (BSRH), Development of the Motorways of the Sea (MoS) and Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods (FRTG), and invited the chairmanships in the BSRH Steering Committee, FRTG Steering Committee and the Ad Hoc Working Group on MoS to organize their next meetings during the second semester of 2023.

The participants took note of the BSEC PERMIS information regarding the BSEC cooperation with the international organizations and the BSEC Sectoral Dialogue Partners in the concrete fields, and appreciated the valuable contribution of the partners to the BSEC cooperation on transport.

Towards Digitalization



Upon invitation by the Union of Road Transport Associations in the BSEC Region (BSEC-URTA) on 6 April 2023, the BSEC PERMIS, represented by Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Dimitrios Rallis, Project Coordinator Mr. Sergii Kravchenko, and Executive Manager Mr. Kanan Murtuzov, participated in the online Meeting of the BSEC-URTA Working Party on Digitalization,

aimed to further discuss ways on how to implement an electronic road permit (e-Permit) in the BSEC Region.

The Meeting, chaired by BSEC-URTA Secretary General Mr. Mehmet Uylukçu, was also attended by representatives of the BSEC-URTA Member Associations, the International Road Transport Union (IRU), the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure of the Republic of Türkiye, as well as by experts from IT-sector.

The participants addressed topical substantive issues of mutual concern related to electronic and physical permits and their use; possibilities of establishing a common data base center and/or implementation of the e-Permit Project at the bilateral level; operational aspects of e-Permit system as well as its introduction.

IRU's 75th Anniversary



This year the International Road Transport Union (IRU), the voice of mobility and logistics companies worldwide, marks its 75th Anniversary.

Established more than seven decades ago to facilitate trade, international road transport and passenger mobility, and to support sustainable development, for many years IRU has been and remains a reliable partner of the BSEC Organization who contributes much into the

development of transport sector in the Black Sea Region. Appreciating this, the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States, at its 42nd Meeting, held on 27 November 2020, welcomed the joint efforts of BSEC PERMIS, IRU and BSEC-URTA in taking practical steps, aimed at facilitating border-crossings in the region.

BSEC highly appreciates the IRU's prominent role in boosting trade, jobs, safety and sustainability through the development of transports and fully shares IRU's vision that mobility is crucial in achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

ITF 2023 Annual Summit



Upon invitation by the United Kingdom Presidency of the International Transport Forum (ITF), the BSEC PERMIS participated in the ITF 2023 Annual Summit, which was held in Leipzig from 24 to 26 May 2023.

The generic topic of this year's Summit was «Transport Enabling Sustainable Economies» and the debates were concentrated on the role of transport as an enabler of economic growth that also drives environmental and social sustainability. It also covered how transport stakeholders can promote system resilience through better planning for recurrent shocks to the transport system.

In his statement at the Open Ministerial Session: «Boosting sustainable economies through greening transport», the BSEC PERMIS

Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu highlighted that the protection of the environment has been high on the agenda of the BSEC Organization, not least in the sector of transports, which has a lot to do with the efforts aimed at finding climate and environmental solutions for the Sustainable Development. In this context, Ambassador Comanescu underlined that BSEC projects, such as the Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods, are expected to contribute to the development of reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, supporting the growth of trade among the countries of the region.

On the sidelines of the Summit the BSEC PERMIS met with the representatives of the International Transport Forum, the International Road Transport Union (IRU), the International Union of Railways (UIC), the Permanent Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Commission TRACECA, the Conference of European Directors of Roads (CEDR), the International Road Federation (IRF) and the Secretary of State for Transport and Infrastructure of Romania. The interlocutors discussed ways and means for further deepening cooperation and coordination in the area of transport.

41st Meeting of the BSEC-URTA General Assembly



Upon invitation by the Union of Road Transport Associations in the BSEC Region (BSEC-URTA), the BSEC PERMIS participated in the 41st Meeting of the BSEC-URTA General Assembly held in Batumi on 9 June 2023.

In his welcoming statement, Ambassador Rallis underlined that BSEC attaches great importance to its cooperation with IRU and BSEC-URTA in their joint efforts to better promote trade and road transport in the wider BSEC Region. The growing partnership of BSEC-URTA with the BSEC Organization provides a good example of cooperation of the public and private sectors in the work of international organizations. This partnership is based on concrete joint projects and actions with regard to the road transport, among which the BSEC Permit System, the digitalization of transport documents, the border-crossing facilitation, etc.

On 8 June 2023, the BSEC PERMIS, along with participants from the BSEC-URTA Member Associations, UNECE, IRU, OECD, etc. took part in the Study visit to the Sarp-Sarpi Border Crossing Point between Georgia and Türkiye, and gained a firsthand acquaintance with the situation at the above BCP, as well as with facilities and conditions created to facilitate seamless border crossings. Exchange of views on how to further improve the efficiency of the work was also held. All these exercises helped to take stock of the actual situation at the above borders, to define the bottlenecks and to focus on the ways for overcoming them in a most appropriate way for the sake of the overall trade and transport facilitation in the region.

15th Istanbul Security Conference 2023



The 15th Istanbul Security Conference 2023 “Navigating Conflict in an Interdependent Region” was organized in Istanbul on 24 April 2023 by Konrad-Adenauer Foundation Türkiye, a long-lasting partner of PERMIS, and

Başkent University (Ankara).

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazăr Comanescu attended the Conference as panelist to the debate on “Opportunities and challenges in the wider Black Sea Region: Cooperation or....?”. He highlighted the importance of the economic dimension of security and further elaborated on BSEC’s contribution to the regional cooperation, dialog and understanding with focus on the efforts and actions needed to overcome the difficulties generated by the current situation in the region.

8th Black Sea and Balkans Security Forum



Invited by the organizers, the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazăr Comanescu participated in the 8th Black Sea and Balkans Security Forum which took place in Bucharest on 18-19 May 2023.

The debates organized in several panels focused on the current and multidimensional security developments and challenges in the region and possible solutions there to. As member of the panel dedicated to energy related issues, Ambassador Comanescu concentrated on the importance of the Black Sea area as an energy hub and key factor in the security of energy production and supply routes and highlighted in this context the activities carried out in the energy sector at the level of BSEC.

Delphi Economic Forum

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated as a panelist in the 8th Annual Meeting of Delphi Economic Forum, which took place in Delphi (Greece) on 26- 29 April 2023.

As a panelist in the sessions on “Securing the Black Sea” and “Battle for the Black Sea - the Strategic Importance of the Region in the Context of the War in Ukraine”, Ambassador Comanescu highlighted the importance of the economic dimension of security and the role of BSEC there through fostering economic cooperation. He emphasized the importance of energy, including security of energy supply, economic cooperation, trade and security of trade flows and routes as well as of food security. He concluded by once again underlining the important role BSEC plays, reminding the participants that the region covered by the territories of BSEC Members States is of paramount geostrategic importance, extending from the

Caspian to the Adriatic seas, and encompassing all countries around Black Sea, the Caucasus and the South Balkans.

On the sidelines of the Forum, Secretary General Comanescu held bilateral talks with the Greek Deputy Foreign Minister H.E. Konstantinos Fragkogiannis. He also had brief exchanges with high officials from the European Commission, International Office of Migration, heads of think tanks such as Elcano (Madrid) and NSC (Bucharest).



Sofia Economic Forum



Upon invitation by the organizers, the BSEC Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu participated as a keynote speaker in the Sofia Economic Forum held in Sofia on 27 June 2023.

Participants were former and current Bulgarian high-level officials, ambassadors accredited in Sofia, high level representatives of European/international organizations, think-tanks and academia, and business community.

In his contribution to the Forum, Ambassador Comanescu focused on the importance of regional economic cooperation, and highlighted in this context the role and priorities of the BSEC as well as the need of better synergies and coordination among the various regional formats of cooperation in the wider Black Sea Area and in South-East Europe.

BSEC PERMIS – CEI-ES 3rd Coordination Meeting

The 3rd Coordination Meeting between the BSEC PERMIS and the Central European Initiative Executive Secretariat (CEI-ES) was held in the BSEC Headquarters on 29 May 2023. The Coordination Meeting took place for the first time with the participation of BSEC and CEI Troikas (Moldova, Serbia and Republic of Türkiye, respectively Bulgaria, Moldova and Albania).

The overall objective of the meeting was to stimulate and facilitate exchanges of views on activities aimed at promoting regional dialogue and cooperation, as well as strengthening the project-oriented capacity of the two Organizations in areas of common interest. The focus was on issues related to energy, climate and environmental protection, culture, tourism and youth as well as project development and implementation. In his opening speech, the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu, highlighted the importance BSEC attaches to the interaction and cooperation with CEI, the aims of which are similar or mutually reinforcing.



Summer Training on Science Communication for the Black Sea Young Ambassadors

The Summer Training of the Black Sea Young Ambassadors Program (BSYA) took place in Istanbul on 12-13 June 2023. The BSYA program is developed to unite youth for the future of the Black Sea, for a healthy, resilient, and sustainable Black Sea. BSYA are young early career ocean professionals who come from different backgrounds in marine and maritime research, industry, policy, and civil society, and either in educational programs or in the early stages of their carrier. More details about the BSYA Program can be found on:

<http://connect2blacksea.org/outreach-introduction-youth-ambassadors/>





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