



PRESS RELEASE ON THE 11TH EDITION OF THE BLACK SEA NGO FORUM
(Brussels, 12-14 November 2018)

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General, Ambassador Michael B. Christides was invited to participate at the 11th edition of the **Black Sea NGO Forum** that took place on 12-14 November 2018 in Brussels, organized by the Romanian NGDO Platform - FOND, in partnership with the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with the financial support of the European Commission.

The **Forum** which unites more than 1000 participants from 11 countries, among which the 10 are BSEC Member States, drew particular attention to the significance of the **Black Sea Synergy** policy framework on its 10th anniversary.

The first session of the 11th edition was dedicated to the stories of 5 NGOs from different Member States, the representatives of which portrayed the history, development and action of each entity, while also describing the issues and problems they are called to address in an environment that isn't as open and positive in their regard as some years back.

Thus, it was underlined that the space of action for NGOs has dwindled dangerously, that the rising wave of nationalism and populism in many countries makes it imperative for NGOs to seek and establish a closer relation with the general public, in order to present themselves and their social contributions in the right way, etc. It was also stressed that funding has become more difficult to come around.

During his statement, the PERMIS Secretary General said, NGOs seem to be going through a painful transition phase: from the "romantic" period of voluntarism in social activity for the benefit of the most vulnerable parts of our societies, with no questions on the NGO's aims or integrity, we are now witnessing the passage into a period where NGOs have, internally, to acquire the necessary strength and capacity (expertise) to act and, externally, to "fight" their way for attracting funds and performing their activities, in an environment that, if not outright hostile, is posing many pressing questions and more barriers.

Ambassador Christides also participated in the Formal Opening Session of the Forum, titled "*The Black Sea Synergy – the Power of Regional Cooperation*". During the said Session, he stressed that the BSEC Organization and its Member States attach great importance in the involvement of civil society for addressing pressing issues confronted by our societies. He added that BSEC fosters for 26 years constructive dialogue and productive synergies to ensure sustainability and effectiveness of policies and projects and appealed to the numerous representatives of NGOs present at the Forum to come forward themselves with concrete proposals of cooperation with BSEC or other governmental entities.