



**PRESS RELEASE ON
THE INTERNATIONAL HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON “INTER-BASIN
COOPERATION ON MARINE LITTER: A FOCUS ON THE DANUBE RIVER AND
THE BLACK SEA”
(Sofia, 4 April 2019)**

The **International High-level Conference on “Inter-basin Cooperation on Marine Litter: a focus on the Danube River and the Black Sea”**, was co-organised by BSEC PERMIS and the *International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS)* within the framework of the Bulgarian BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office, with the financial support of the Ministry of Environment and Water of the Republic of Bulgaria, the European Commission, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC) and of the Central European Initiative (CEI) Cooperation Fund.

The main objective of the event was to assess the challenge of marine litter, as well as to facilitate discussions and the exchange of relevant knowledge and good practices, focusing mainly on the Danube River and the Black Sea basin.

Introductory speeches were delivered by H.E. Mr. Neno DIMOV, Minister of Environment and Water of the Republic of Bulgaria, H.E. Mrs. Emilia KRALEVA, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria and H.E. Mr. Asaf HAJIYEV, Secretary General of PABSEC. H.E. Mr. Karmenu VELLA, EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, also saluted the participants through a short video message.

The keynote speech was delivered by Mr. Bernhard FRIESS, Maritime Policy and Blue Economy Director, Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the European Commission, who stressed the need for coordinated and targeted actions in tackling efficiently marine litter; he also presented some of the most recent activities of the EU on the issue.

The Secretary General of BSEC PERMIS, Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES, welcomed all dignitaries and participants to the event, underlining that the time to act – and act fast – has already arrived and it is the responsibility of all to coordinate their urgently needed efforts for addressing a situation which imperils the wellbeing of individuals and the economies of States.

The Conference was attended by high level participants such as H.E. the Deputy Minister of Environment and Water of the Republic of Bulgaria, Mrs. Atanaska NIKOLOVA and the State Secretary of the Ministry of Environment of Romania, H.E. Mr. Ion CIMPEANU, as well as renowned experts, businessmen, policy makers, academicians, and NGO representatives from the Danube, the Black Sea, the Mediterranean, the Baltic Sea and the Atlantic countries, who shared their views and best practices in four targeted sessions. The event was attended by more than eighty participants.