



PRESS RELEASE
ON PARTICIPATION IN THE UNION OF MEDITERRANEAN'S HIGH-LEVEL
CONFERENCE FOR THE LAUNCH OF THE 1ST PROGRESS REPORT ON EURO-
MEDITERRANEAN REGIONAL INTEGRATION

The BSEC PERMIS Secretary General, Ambassador Michael B. CHRISTIDES, was invited to participate in the High-Level Conference for the Launch of the **1st Progress Report on Euro-Mediterranean Regional Integration**, hosted online by the **Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)** on 27th May 2021.

In his welcome-speech, Mr. Nasser Kamel, UfM Secretary General, underlined that the outcome of the above Progress Report shows that although regional integration has advanced in the UfM region, progress has been slow and remains below its potential. The Report highlights two important challenges that still stand: inadequate infrastructure for transport and energy connectivity and a lack of common vision on human mobility as a driver of innovation and growth in the region.

He also mentioned that *"integration means breaking down barriers, building connections across borders and facilitating the movement of people, goods, and ideas. Deepening integration and cooperation between countries will be key in the region's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic."*

The event brought together representatives of different regional organizations, free trade areas, as well as intergovernmental political and economic unions to share their respective experiences in promoting regional integration and to showcase best practices which can be replicated in different sea basins.

Ambassador CHRISTIDES took part in the panel *"How to unlock the full potential for greater regional economic integration?"* In an honest appraisal, he said that *"perhaps one of the biggest obstacle for being more efficient and effective in establishing greater regional integration is the fact that, inspired by initial enthusiasm, regional organizations usually establish too many "subsidiary bodies" with a huge number of meetings. This plethora of events understandably diminishes their concrete, tangible results, driving the organizations into an unavoidable vicious circle: less tangible results, declining interest from Member States, diminishing participation and, thus, less effectiveness of the organizations. We need to transform this circle into a virtuous one"*, he declared.

To *"unlock the full potential for greater regional economic integration"* Ambassador CHRISTIDES said that two factors were of paramount importance: firstly, a greater *"sense of ownership"* and the *"human factor"*. The promotion of regional cooperation and integration cannot be seen as the field for pursuing selfish or personal expediencies; it should function as the ground for sincere dialogue and mutual understanding among responsible and qualified representatives of the participating Member States".