



PRESS RELEASE
ON THE LAUNCHING OF THE BLACK SEA REACT PROJECT PILOT ACTIVITY

The Permanent International Secretariat of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC PERMIS), together with the Sariyer Municipality, organized on 15 June 2021 a small-scale collection event of old fishing nets and marine litter, on the occasion of the launching of the *Black Sea React Project*; this project is co-funded by the European Commission and run under the coordination of the BSEC PERMIS, in cooperation with the Municipality of Sariyer, the *International Center for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS)*, the *Turkish Plastics Association (PAGEV)* and the *Plastics Europe Association*. The Consulate General of the USA in Istanbul is an Associated Partner.

The aim of the said Project is to reduce marine litter, including plastics, by involving local fishermen in the collection of old fishing nets which can be recycled into new, useful products for everyday life. The Sariyer Municipality was chosen for the pilot activity and, if successful, efforts will focus on the promotion of similar endeavours in more coastal municipalities from interested BSEC Member States. For more information on the Project: (<http://www.bsec-bsvkc.org/Forms/Projects/OngoingProjectDetails?targetID=1>)

The launching took place aboard a cruiser in the Bosphorus waters with the event hosted by the Municipality of Sariyer, with the participation of the Mayor of Sariyer Mr. Şükrü Genç, the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Michael B. Christides, the First Deputy Secretary General of BSEC PERMIS Ambassador Ebru Barutcu Gokdenizler, the US Consul General Ms. Daria Darnell and several guests from the Istanbul diplomatic corps. The Turkish world-champion in free-diving and advocate of Clean Seas Ms. Sahika Ercumen, who graciously accepted to support the relevant efforts of PERMIS, performed a symbolic diving in the Bosphorus and collected abandoned fishing nets from the seabed.

Welcoming the guests, the Mayor of Sariyer Mr. Şükrü Genç, said that the *Black Sea React Project* will create awareness on the negative effects of ghost nets and plastic litter on the marine environment, as well as help diminish the frightening amount of litter so recklessly thrown into the sea. If marine pollution is not prevented, he added, our sea and source of livelihood for millions of people will “die”.

In his statement, Ambassador Michael B. Christides reminded once again how urgently our seas need our help and said that the BSEC Organization’s aim is to continue raising awareness among the people of the BSEC Member States to reduce marine litter in the Black Sea and to encourage plastic recycling. He briefly described the main phases of the project and thanked all involved in its implementation, especially the Municipality of Sariyer for being among the first ones to accept hosting this first pilot project.



The US Consul General, Ms. Daria Darnell, expressed her belief that the Project will be beneficial to the entire Black Sea and underlined that the US Consulate General is happy and proud to have financially contributed to its implementation.

Interviewed by the numerous media representatives, Ms Sahika Ercumen expressed her preoccupation on the continuing aggravation of the marine environment in our Seas and confirmed her commitment to stay actively involved in all efforts to address this serious problem, like the Black Sea React Project.

The above Project will run for 15 months under the supervision and coordination of the BSEC PERMIS.