



Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation
Hellenic Chairmanship 1.7 - 31.12.2019

**PRIORITIES OF THE HELLENIC CHAIRMANSHIP-IN-OFFICE
(1st July-31st December 2019)**

“BSEC – Black Sea, Green Energy, Blue Growth”

I. Principal objectives

Greece holds the Chairmanship-in-Office of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation for the period 1st July – 31st December 2019. Under the motto “*Black Sea, Green Energy, Blue Growth*” the Hellenic Chairmanship aspires to further pave the way in achieving the goal of promoting the economic dimension of cooperation among BSEC Member States touching upon its untapped potential in a sustainable manner and with respect to the environment.

In order to achieve continuity and consistency among BSEC’s rotating Chairmanships-in-office, the Hellenic Chair will follow-up priorities promoted by the preceding Bulgarian Chair, especially those on increasing the effectiveness and international profile of the Organization. Greece will focus on the need to practically enhance the project-oriented character of BSEC, in order to achieve a more pragmatic multilateral cooperation among the Organization’s Member States. In this regard, tackling the long pending issue of the replenishment of the BSEC Project Development Fund through the adoption of a more sound financial support of it will be of key importance.

The Hellenic Republic, as an EU and BSEC Member State, will continue the efforts of the Bulgarian Chairmanship-in-Office, to enhance cooperation with the European Union. It is our firm belief that BSEC – EU interaction can and should evolve into a mutually beneficial relationship that will bring tangible results to the wider Black Sea area. In the same vein, we will support the initiatives of the BSEC PERMIS for a successful participation to joint

projects with the European Commission and we intend to continue our efforts to this direction.

The Hellenic Chairmanship also intends to re-initiate a systematic approach to the long-standing and so far inconclusive discussion on reforming the modalities of work and the institutional framework of the Organization. The need to proceed in this direction is one shared by all of us; we have noted with appreciation the relevant interventions of Heads of Delegations in previous Ministerial Meetings, including the recent one in Sofia; perhaps we do not – yet – agree on all issues, but the realization of the need to reform BSEC and to act now is there.

II. Sectoral priorities

Based on the experience of the Organization, it is high time to consider thoroughly the functioning of the main pillar of BSEC namely its Working Groups in terms of increasing their efficiency with tangible deliverables. Therefore, we consider that a substantial involvement of the competent Ministries with the participation of experts is of paramount importance. In this regard, we express our readiness to explore and put into effect all possible institutional measures to address the situation.

As far as sectoral cooperation is concerned, the Hellenic Chair-in-Office will endeavour to prioritize cooperation on:

(a) The Blue Economy growth. As “Blue Economy” we understand the growth potential of the **sea**, like the **Black Sea**, which remains largely untapped. Therefore we will step up efforts to meet the pressing environmental needs of the Black Sea. There are definitely blue growth possibilities in the region. Our aim will be to sustainably preserve the marine ecosystem, while at the same time boosting economic growth across the region. We will focus on concrete, result-oriented projects, adoption of a bottom-up approach, to be implemented in small, decisive steps and, most importantly, with stakeholders playing the leading role to ensure ownership.

b) Transport cooperation. We will work to implement the main provisions of the recently adopted Declarations, which we believe can help our region to achieve easier, more efficient and less expensive modes of transport, both for persons and goods, and at the same time preserve our precious environment.

c) **Green energy and transport:** is a key factor to sustainable mobility and growth, as it involves the effective use of environmentally friendly modes of transport, in order to accommodate rising traffic volumes. Continuing the relevant achievements of our Bulgarian colleagues, the Hellenic Chair-in-Office intends to accelerate the implementation of the two major projects of BSEC, the **Black Sea Ring Highway** and the **Motorways of the Sea**, by accelerating the work of the relevant mechanisms.

d) **Impact of Climate Change on Cultural Heritage.** We will build upon the assessment and conclusions of the International Conference hosted by Greece in June 2019 as well as the efforts already undertaken by the international community. Our aim is to create for the first time a regional framework which will address climate change and its risks, challenges and overall impact on a huge wealth of cultural and natural heritage in the Black Sea Region. Specifically we will seek to elaborate jointly with our BSEC partners possible solutions on how to monitor the damage caused and protect our heritage through the use of technology and the exchange of best practices.

d) **Tourism:** the Hellenic CiO will further promote the aims set out in the past relevant Declarations, thus continuing promoting the BSEC Region as one of the leading tourist destinations worldwide through close cooperation among the BSEC member states. Specifically we will encourage the development of film-induced and gastronomic tourism as destination marketing tools in the BSEC countries and we will consider the best ways these forms of tourism can be exploited for creating jobs, for attracting tourists as well as for promoting local food production and ethnic and regional cuisines in the BSEC Region. Most importantly, we will continue to further enhance close cooperation with the World Tourism Organization and to this end, we will explore possible ways of implementing the MoU between BSEC and the WTO.

e) **Good governance:** the development and improvement of living standards in our countries depend more and more on “generating” reforms, at the core of which is the good governance. Drawing from this approach, we will seek to address the role and the effect of the good governance in the economic development. Core idea will be the impact of good governance in the rates of economic growth of GDP of the countries involved.

III. Events

The calendar of the Hellenic Chairmanship-in-Office includes a number of high-level events in different areas of cooperation. Among them:

- The 41st Meeting of the Council of **Ministers of Foreign Affairs** of the BSEC Member States in Athens, in December 2019.
- The Informal Meeting at breakfast of the Council of **Ministers of Foreign Affairs** of the BSEC Member States in New York in September 2019, on the sidelines of the 74th UN General Assembly.
- Meeting of **Ministers in charge of Health** of the BSEC Member States (October 2019, Bucharest)