

**Statement by H.E. AMBASSADOR MICHAEL B. CHRISTIDES**  
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***Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization***

**The High-Level Meeting for the Euro-Asia Region**  
**on Improving Cooperation on Transit, Trade Facilitation and the 2030**  
**Agenda for Sustainable Development**  
**(Session 2: Cooperation on Transit Infrastructure Development and Transit**  
**Corridors – best practices, challenges and opportunities)**

Ha Noi, Viet Nam, 7-9 March 2017

## **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I already had the honor and privilege, during the morning Session of today, to thank and congratulate the organizers of this very important and timely meeting and, at the same time, present in a very schematic manner some of the initiatives undertaken by the Organization I have the honor to represent here. In view of the above, I will limit myself to briefly inform you on what we have achieved during our first 25 years of activity – we are celebrating in 2017 our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary – as a contribution to efforts of many stakeholders, private and public, to improve cooperation and regional integration.

Ladies and Gentlemen, there is no need to underline that Transportation and Trade Facilitation are sectors to which BSEC attaches particular importance; after all, “**Economic Cooperation**” means exchange of goods and services, movement of people, in one word, greater connectivity!

If you look into a map, you will note that the region covered by BSEC Member States is straddling the two continents, Asia and Europe; three of our Member States are land-locked countries; so, whatever progress the BSEC Organization was - or, will be - able to achieve in implementing infrastructure projects that facilitate the transport of people and goods between its Member States, **these** accomplishments will also directly support the efforts for improving connectivity between the two great continents. Even more so, as our activity does not take place in a vacuum, but in a way and manner that integrates it to existing multinational Transport projects, European or Euro-Asian.

One of the “pet projects” of BSEC in road infrastructure, “***the Black Sea Ring Highway***” refers to coordinated efforts of our Member States for upgrading to “European” standards almost 7,5 thousand km of highway around the Black Sea, connecting its main ports and all the capitals of BSEC Member States. Some parts of this Ring Highway are ready, more are under construction under the initiative and supervision of our respective Members, others are in the stage of planning.

Sub-projects of this initiative are the promotion of intermodal transportation, of road ancillary infrastructure (for example, the IRU *Model Highway Initiative* connecting Georgia to Armenia and Azerbaijan), the introduction of a common PERMIT System, of the International Vehicle Weight Certificate, etc.

Another major project, called “***Motorways of the Sea***” refers to coordinated efforts for the upgrading of port-infrastructure, the implementation of good practices, for increasing compatibility and interconnectivity of traffic control systems, and for safeguarding free and fair competition in international shipping. Almost 43 ports, not only in the Black Sea, have expressed interest in participating in this ambitious project.

Our constant efforts are, also, aimed at diminishing red tape and bureaucracy when it comes to moving goods - and people - across land or sea borders, by **harmonizing and simplifying procedures, formalities and the necessary documentation**. We might build the best of highways, yet if we do not streamline the above bottlenecks, we will continuously lose time, profit and patience.

Our specialized Working Groups – on *Trade and Economic Development* and on *Customs Matters* – are preparing the **Trade Facilitation Strategy** for the BSEC region, which is expected to be finalized and adopted in the very near future, thus an important achievement for marking the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the BSEC Organization.

The BSEC Organization always seeks - and already enjoys - fruitful cooperation with many international partners, like UNECE, UNDP, OSCE, CEI, TRACECA, Danube Commission, IRU, IRF, BSEC-URTA, BASPA and other international organizations. Especially with IRU and the *BSEC Union of Road Transport Associations* (BSEC-URTA) we have established a partnership based on concrete joint projects and actions with regard to road transports. And, of course, we cooperate very successfully with the UNECE, along the ambitious provisions of our bilateral Agreement, which has been concluded in 2001.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Despite the obvious difficulties, given the overall situation in the wider Black Sea region, the BSEC Organization aspires to assume a greater role in promoting the concept of international intermodal transport corridors, in order to facilitate trade and ensure greater regional integration.

Our presence here today offers us the opportunity to learn about the experiences of other regional organizations and benefit from their lessons learned. At the same time, we are here to offer our cooperation to any stakeholder interested to reach, efficiently and effectively, our Member States, which cover the vital geographic region that unites Europe to Asia, in order to jointly plan and execute projects of common interest, organize workshops and seminars on issues covering transports and trade facilitation, etc. In this respect we have accumulated ourselves precious experience and many international organizations have already cooperated with BSEC in organizing important meetings in our beautiful premises in hospitable Istanbul.

From this important podium, allow me to renew our invitation to all interested parties to continue and enhance this precious synergy in a more systematic and long-term way.

Thank you for your kind attention.