

**ORGANIZATION
OF THE BLACK SEA
ECONOMIC COOPERATION**

**INTERNATIONAL
CENTER FOR
BLACK SEA STUDIES**

**FRIEDRICH
EBERT
FOUNDATION**

**WORKSHOP
GETTING THE ACT TOGETHER:
STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS' CAPACITIES IN THE BSEC COUNTRIES**

Yerevan, 19-20 March 2003

Summary Proceedings

1. The Workshop titled "Getting the Act Together: Strengthening International Relations' Capacities in the BSEC Countries" was held in Yerevan, Republic of Armenia, on 19-20 March 2003. It was organized by the Permanent International Secretariat of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC PERMIS) and the International Center for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS), in cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.
2. Welcoming statements were delivered by H.E. Manuk TOPUZYAN, Minister, Cabinet Chief of Staff, Prime Ministry; H.E. Mr. Valeri CHECHELASHVILI, Ambassador, Secretary General of the Permanent International Secretariat of the BSEC; Mr. Yiannis PAPANICOLAOU, Director General of the International Center for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS); and Mr. Winfried SCHNEIDER-DETERS, Director, Coordination Office Caucasus and Central Asia, Friedrich Ebert Foundation.
3. The Workshop was co-chaired in rotation by Messrs. Paruyr HOVHANNISYAN, H.E. Valeri CHECHELASHVILI, Yiannis PAPANICOLAOU, Winfried SCHNEIDER-DETERS.
4. The Workshop was attended by the representatives of the following BSEC Member States:
 - Republic of Albania
 - Republic of Armenia
 - Georgia
 - Republic of Moldova
 - Romania
 - Russian Federation
 - Republic of Turkey
 - Ukraine
5. Lead speakers included:
 - Mr. Derry ORMOND, Former Head of the Public Management Service of OECD, Member of the ICBSS Board;
 - Mr. Victor LOBANOV, Deputy Director, State University of Management, Institute of Public Administration;
 - Mr. Nikos VARELIDIS, Director, PRISMA Consultants, Advisor, ICBSS;

- Mr. Michael LAKE, Retired EU Ambassador to Turkey and Hungary;
- Ms. Jivka STANEVA, Head of Unit "European Integration", Council of Ministers, Bulgarian Government;
- Ms. Violeta BAU, Director of the Institute for Public Policy (Romanian think tank);
- Ms. Nevenka ČREŠNAR-PREGAR, former Secretary General of the Slovenian Government.

6. The list of participants is attached as Annex I and the Program of the Workshop is attached as Annex II.

7. The Workshop came to the following conclusions:

7.1. Institutional renewal and improvement of governance is a top priority for BSEC countries and international relations is an area where the strengthening of capacities is urgently needed.

7.2. Institutional renewal and governance improvement represents for most BSEC countries a difficult task and a challenge for governments. It has to be tackled systematically with a well thought and long term strategy and requires full support and commitment at the highest political level. Each country has to develop its own individual strategy which should respect, and fit with, its specific political and socio-economic conditions and its development priorities.

7.3. Nevertheless, every country can benefit from the experience of other countries regarding institutional renewal and governmental improvement. The work of OECD in the 1980's and 1990's and the work of SIGMA for Central and Eastern European countries in the 1990's represent very useful sources of experience. Of course, BSEC countries cannot and should not copy such experiences but can and should draw on these experiences and benefit from the lessons learned regarding good practices, approaches and methods to pursue reform, and pitfalls and mistakes to be avoided.

7.4. Quite apart from international experience, BSEC countries can also learn from each other. Many BSEC countries have a lot in common regarding their socio-economic and political conditions and their institutional systems. They have similar, though not identical, problems and can cooperate in developing their strategies and approaches for pursuing reform. They can do this through the exchange of experience; through cooperation in reform projects or training, on a collective, bilateral or multilateral basis; and, perhaps, in the longer term, through the establishment of observatory type mechanisms regarding the field of institutional renewal and governance improvement.

7.5. Collective efforts in the direction of institutional renewal and governance improvement in the context of BSEC, should be pursued so as to have a specific focus and lead to tangible and visible results. This is the rationale behind the choice of the field of international relations capacities as the focus of this BSEC initiative.

7.6. This conference provided a useful introduction to the field of institutional renewal and good governance, reviewed the conditions and problems facing BSEC governments regarding the specific area of international relations, and gave the opportunity to participants to share their experiences and ideas for the future in this field.

7.7.The initial statement of the objectives for this series of three workshops provided that the second workshop, to take place in Baku in the autumn, would concentrate on the legal and regulatory aspects of strengthening international relations competences. BSEC PERMIS and ICBSS will review this provision and prepare an agenda and programme for the second workshop that will take into account the wealth of information shared during this first workshop, the interest and priorities of the participants regarding institutional renewal and good governance in the field of international relations, and the problems identified by the participants in this field. Several key problems have been identified during this workshop that would be relevant for the agenda of the second workshop. They include, for example, issues such as the organization and staffing of international relations functions, coordination structures within government, the need to adapt national legislation so as to meet international economic and political cooperation and trade obligations as well as prepare BSEC countries for closer relations with the European Union.

8. The participants expressed their sincere appreciation and thanks to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the BSEC PERMIS and ICBSS for their help and contribution in organizing the Workshop.
