



ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Permanent International Secretariat

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REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE BSEC WORKING GROUP ON SMEs

Istanbul, BSEC Headquarters, 14 December 2010

1. The Meeting of the BSEC Working Group (WG) on SMEs was held in Istanbul, at the BSEC Headquarters, on 14 December 2010.
2. The following BSEC Member States attended the Meeting:

Republic of Albania
Republic of Armenia
Republic of Azerbaijan
Hellenic Republic
Republic of Moldova
Romania
Russian Federation
Republic of Serbia
Republic of Turkey
3. The following BSEC Related Bodies also participated in the Meeting:

Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC)
BSEC Business Council (BSEC BC)
4. The following BSEC Observer attended the Meeting:

Czech Republic

The list of participants is attached as Annex I.

5. The Meeting was chaired by Professor Chris PITELIS, President of the Hellenic Organization for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises and Handicraft (EOMMEX S.A.).
6. Ambassador Sumru NOYAN, First Deputy Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS made an opening statement. In the statement she stated that the meeting is a good opportunity for an exchange of information and experiences and also an occasion to discuss practical steps to follow up the recommendations of two successful workshops held since the previous Working Group, conducted in cooperation and with the valuable support of the *Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung* for Turkey.
7. Ambassador Noyan pointed out that SMEs and entrepreneurs play a significant role in all economies as generators of employment and income and drivers of innovation and growth, and that women still represent a minority of all entrepreneurs in the BSEC region. Therefore she suggested to consider the proposal to establish a Forum of women's entrepreneur organizations in the BSEC region and to work out an Action Plan for Women Entrepreneurs in the region.
8. The First Deputy Secretary General also mentioned the motto of Hellenic Chairmanship-in-Office "Black Sea turns Green" and the Action Plan proposed by the Country-Coordinator of the Working Group, which focuses precisely on the Green Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development, thus ensuring the necessary follow-up of the exchanges that are going to take place on this issue. The text of the opening statement of Ambassador Noyan is attached as Annex II.
9. Professor PITELIS made an introductory statement emphasizing the importance of regional cooperation, green entrepreneurship and sustainable development, especially in a region with comparative advantages related to the environment. He stated that in today's context an institutional and regulatory framework is required in order to promote green entrepreneurship. The President of EOMMEX pointed out that public policy alongside pluralism and diversity, as well as green entrepreneurship could contribute to a sustainable development of the economies of the BSEC Member States.
10. The draft agenda of the Meeting was discussed and adopted. The agenda, as adopted by the WG, is attached as Annex III.

STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTIONS, DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS RELATED TO SMEs

11. The WG considered the implementation of the Decisions of the 21st and 22nd Meetings of the BSEC Council related to SMEs, particularly with reference to the establishment of BSEC Quality Award for SMEs and consideration of the recommendations of the BSEC-KAS Workshops "Women and Entrepreneurship" held in Chisinau on 30 September-2 October 2009 and "SMEs in the Time of Global Crises" held in Tirana on 5-7 May 2010.
12. The WG noted that the issue of BSEC Quality Award has been considered within the BSEC Business Council and that appropriate steps are being taken by the Board of Directors of the BSEC Business Council and its International Secretariat in order to draft the terms of reference and to organize the quality performance competition for SMEs from BSEC region in cooperation with the interested institutions of the Member States.
13. The WG acknowledged that the recommendations of the BSEC-KAS Workshops have been considered under Agenda item 4 and concrete proposals for their implementation have been suggested.

CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL OF THE ACTION PLAN OF THE BSEC WORKING GROUP ON SMEs

14. The Working Group considered and adopted the Action Plan on the activities of the Working Group on SMEs for 2010-2011 elaborated by the Hellenic Republic, as the Country Coordinator of the Working Group.

15. The Working Group agreed that the Plan of Action will aim to intensify the cooperation, exchange of experience and best practices of the Member States in the field of SMEs and will facilitate the interaction of the relevant institutions of the Member States while implementing regional programs and projects of common interest. The Action Plan, as adopted by the Working Group, is attached as Annex IV.

CONSIDERATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BSEC-KAS WORKSHOPS “SMEs IN THE TIME OF GLOBAL CRISES” AND “WOMEN AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP”

16. Under this agenda item, Ms. Gülseren ONANÇ, President of the Women Entrepreneurs Association of Turkey (KAGIDER) informed the meeting of the activities of the KAGIDER related to support and assistance of women entrepreneurs. She stated that KAGIDER took part in the elaboration by the Turkish Government of the Employment Strategy, which assist and encourage women to start working. She also mentioned the activities towards supporting child care services and the participation of KAGIDER in the elaboration of a report on that subject by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). The representative of KAGIDER mentioned the possibility of setting up a network, which assists women entrepreneurs with advice on investment opportunities.

17. In conformity with the instructions of the 21st and 22nd Meetings of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the Working Group considered the recommendations of the BSEC-KAS Workshops on “SMEs in the Time of Global Crises” (Tirana, 5-7 May 2010) and on “Women and Entrepreneurship” (Chisinau, 30 September-2October 2009) and stressed their importance for the support of SMEs development in the BSEC Member States.

18. In line with the recommendations of the Workshops, the Working Group suggested to establish a Forum to bring together all women entrepreneur organizations in the region and prepare an Action Plan for Women Entrepreneurs which could serve as a road map for future collaboration.

19. The WG welcomed the idea of undertaking initiatives for promoting the networking of women entrepreneurship in the BSEC region.

20. The BSEC Business Council informed that it will continue elaborating projects and networks in cooperation with the national associations for women entrepreneurs of the BSEC Member States.

EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION REGARDING “GREEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”

21. In conformity with the adopted Plan of Action of the Working Group on SMEs, the participants of the Meeting: Mr. Konstantinos ZAIMIS, BSEC Hellenic Development Fund Manager; Ms. Eftychia BACOPOULOU, Secretary General of the BSEC Business Council; Ms. Gülşen

ALPER, SME Expert, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organization (KOSGEB) of the Republic of Turkey; and Ms. Klery STAVRAKAKI, Director, International Cooperation Department, EOMMEX S.A, made presentations regarding green entrepreneurship and sustainable development, attached as Annex V.

22. The WG welcomed the “green agenda” of the BSEC Business Council and in particular the initiatives related to the establishment of the green business network in the BSEC region.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

23. In conformity with the Manual of Operations of the BSEC Project Development Fund (PDF) the Working Group considered and assessed the PDF Project “Technology Transfer Network for BSEC Region” submitted by Armenia (leading partner), Greece, Romania and Bulgaria.

24. The Working Group concluded that the Project Application has been elaborated and submitted in conformity with relevant provisions of PDF Manual of Operations and that it is in conformity with the adopted priorities of the Working Group on SMEs and corresponds to the criteria applicable to the projects to be financed from the Project Development Fund.

25. The representative of the Russian Federation informed the meeting of the activities of the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation aimed at supporting SMEs development in the regions of the Russian Federation. He stated that in conformity with the approved plan, export oriented SMEs are being offered financial grants and subsidies. He also mentioned the federal portal which enables SMEs to find the relevant legal information and framework for their activity on the territory of the Russian Federation.

DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

26. The exact date and venue of the next meeting of the WG on SMEs will be communicated by PERMIS to the Member States at a later stage.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING

27. The WG adopted the present Report for submission to the next Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials of the BSEC Member States.
