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**REPORT
OF THE MEETING OF THE
BSEC WORKING GROUP ON TRANSPORT**

Istanbul, 12-13 February 2009

1. The Meeting of the BSEC Working Group (WG) on Transport was held in Istanbul on 12-13 February 2009.
2. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Arthur SARGSYAN, the Deputy Head of the Foreign Relations Department of the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Armenia.
3. The Meeting was attended by the representatives of the following BSEC Member States:
 - Republic of Armenia
 - Republic of Azerbaijan
 - Republic of Bulgaria
 - Georgia
 - Hellenic Republic
 - Republic of Moldova
 - Romania
 - Russian Federation
 - Republic of Serbia
 - Republic of Turkey
4. The representative of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization of BSEC (PABSEC) also participated in the Meeting.
5. The representative of the Republic of Poland attended the Meeting as Observer.
6. The representatives of the Republic of Montenegro, the Black and Azov Sea Ports Association (BASPA), the Black Sea International Shipowners Association (BINSAs), the Black Sea Association of Shipbuilders and Shiprepairers (BRASS), and the Union of Road Transport Associations in the BSEC Region (BSEC-URTA) participated in the Meeting as Sectoral Dialogue Partners.
7. The Meeting was attended by the representatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the International Road Federation (IRF) and the International Road Transport Union (IRU) as Guests.

The list of participants is attached as Annex I.

8. The Meeting was addressed by H.E. Ambassador Leonidas CHRYSANTHOPOULOS, the Secretary General of BSEC PERMIS.

9. The Draft Agenda of the Meeting was discussed, amended and adopted. The Agenda, as adopted, is attached as Annex II.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESOLUTIONS, DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE FOLLOW-UP OF THE DECLARATIONS AND JOINT STATEMENTS ADOPTED BY THE MINISTERS OF TRANSPORT

-Implementation of the Action Plan of the BSEC Working Group on Transport for the period of 2007-2009 and the Work Program for 2008

10. The delegation of the Russian Federation, as a Country-Coordinator, made a presentation of the BSEC transport activities for the period May 2007 - February 2009 in accordance with the Action Plan of the BSEC Working Group on Transport for the period of 2007-2009. The presentation in particular included information about the work on the implementation of the BSEC MoUs on the Coordinated Development of the Black Sea Ring Highway, Development of the Motorways of the Sea and the Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods in the BSEC Region.

11. It was noted that for this period two Ministerial Meetings (Istanbul, 5 July 2007 and Odessa, 10 April 2008), three meetings of the Working Group, five (four informal and 1 formal) Meetings of the Steering Committee on the Development of the Black Sea Ring Highway (SC BSRH), four meetings (three informal and one formal) Meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group (WG) on the Development of the Motorways of the Sea (AhWG MoS) and two meetings of the Steering Committee on the Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods in the BSEC Region (SC FRTG) were held.

12. BSRH Caravan made his trip, promoting the BSRH project and collecting data on the existing road conditions and cross border conditions in the BSEC Member States.

13. BSEC continued its transport cooperation with other international organizations (UNECE, OSCE, CEI, IRU and IRF) and organizations having Sectoral Dialogue Partnership with BSEC (BASPA, BINSAs, BRASS and BSEC-URTA). BSEC rendered its support to a number of conferences, held in the Region, which addressed the issues of development of passenger cruise lines, container transportation, ports and tourism.

14. The Country-Coordinator noted that the issues of “Measures to improve transport activity conditions” and “Transport safety and security provision” contained in the Action Plan are on the agenda of the UNECE and it was recommended not to duplicate this work, but to concentrate the efforts in one organization..

15. At the same time, the Country-Coordinator proposed to include into the agendas of the following WG meetings an item as the “Exchange of Information” – the issue, which was foreseen by the Action Plan and demands permanent attention of the WG.

16. The Working Group concluded that the Action Plan of the BSEC Working Group on Transport for the period of 2007-2009 was fulfilled in general and agreed with the mentioned recommendations of the Country-Coordinator.

17. Furthermore, the Working Group assessed positively the achievements of the Russian Federation's coordination and expressed its high appreciation to the Russian Side for the work done. The Russian Federation was kindly requested to present an evaluation report on the BSEC transport cooperation under its coordination to the next Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials.

-Coordinated Development of the Black Sea Ring Highway

18. In the capacity of a Country-Coordinator in the SC BSRH, the Russian Federation, informed that the MoU on the Coordinated Development of the Black Sea Ring Highway entered into force on 1 November 2008. At its First (formal) Meeting, held on 15-16 January 2009 in Istanbul, the SC BSRH adopted documents necessary for the functioning of the Steering Committee and its Joint Permanent Technical Secretariat (BSRH JPTS). The Steering Committee declared the commencement of the work of the BSRH JPTS, to be operated by the Greek public company "Egnatia Odos A.E", located in Thessaloniki. The BSRH JPTS has started its activities and submitted to the Parties the first materials which were requested by the Steering Committee.

19. The Steering Committee decided that the Presidency of the Russian Federation in the Steering Committee commenced on 1 January 2009.

20. The Steering Committee decided to convene its Extraordinary Meeting in May 2009 in order to finalize the BSRH main route, its map and to make a preliminary cost estimation of the BSRH project.

21. The WG welcomed the commencement of the work of the Steering Committee and its Secretariat.

22. Furthermore, the WG encouraged the Steering Committee to take further steps necessary for the implementation of the MoU. It recommended to the Steering Committee to benefit from the work done by the UNECE on the elaboration of the TEM and TER Master Plan and from the cooperation with the CEI on road infrastructure projects.

-Development of the Motorways of the Sea in the BSEC Region¹

23. The Working Group was informed about the outcome of the First (official) Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Development of the Motorways of the Sea (WG MoS), held in Constanta on 28-29 January 2009.

24. It was noted, that the WG MoS has so far not resolved a number of essential issues of conceptual nature, related to the implementation of the MoU.

25. The Working Group called on the Parties to the MoU to take concrete steps for its implementation. They were invited to exchange, via PERMIS, their proposals in this regard and to set up a date for the next meeting once the necessary preparations are completed.

-Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods in the BSEC Region

26. The Delegation of the Republic of Turkey, as a Country-Coordinator of the Steering Committee on Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods in the BSEC Region, informed about the

¹ The MoU on the Development of the Motorways of the Sea entered into force on 1 December 2008.

outcome of the Round Table devoted to the NEA research on the implementation of the MoU on Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods in the BSEC Region (Istanbul, 10 February 2009) and the Third Meeting of the Steering Committee (Istanbul, 11 February 2009).

27. It was noted that following the recommendations of the research, provided by the NEA Research and Training, the Steering Committee elaborated on three options related to the gradual liberalization of transit and bilateral international road transport of goods in the BSEC Member States.

28. The Steering Committee elaborated a set of measures on the issues of introduction of the International Vehicle Weight Certificate, contained in the Annex 8 to the UNECE International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods (1982), harmonization of charging policies for the international road transport and facilitation of visa procedures for professional drivers - nationals of the BSEC Member States.

29. The Steering Committee decided to convene its Extraordinary Meeting in the first half of 2009.

30. The WG took note of the information on the activities of the Steering Committee and invited the Parties to the MoU to make further practical steps related to its implementation.

31. The WG also invited the Member States², which have not yet signed the Agreement, to inform officially about their interest to access the Agreement on the Facilitation of Visa Procedures for Professional Drivers Nationals of the BSEC Member States.

32. Regarding the Report of the Third Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods and the Study of NEA, the Hellenic Republic informed that it holds a general reservation and it will provide its views after consultations with the competent Greek authorities.

33. An Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for Professional Lorry Drivers Nationals of the BSEC Member States was opened for signature and signed by the Republic of Albania, the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Moldova and the Republic of Turkey during the Nineteenth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States, held in Tirana, the Republic of Albania, on 23 October 2008.

34. Furthermore, the WG encouraged the BSEC PERMIS to continue its collaboration with IRU and BSEC-URTA on the issues of facilitation of road transport of goods as it was requested by the Steering Committee.

35. The WG invited the Chair of the Steering Committee to set up in contact with the BSEC PERMIS the date of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Steering Committee.

36. The Delegation of the Republic of Armenia informed the WG about preparations for the forthcoming meeting of Ministers of Transport of the BSEC Member States to be held on 27 March 2009. It was said that invitations to the Ministers and international organizations were sent through diplomatic channels and directly. A Meeting of Experts will be held on 26 March 2009 in Yerevan to prepare a final document of the Meeting of Ministers. The Armenian side reiterated its invitation to the Ministers and organizations to take part in the meeting.

² The BSEC Member States and EU Members have already expressed their position with regard to the Agreement.

BSEC INTERACTION WITH EU AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS (UNECE, IRU, IRF) IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF EURO-ASIAN TRANSPORT LINKS IN THE BSEC REGION

37. The WG took note of the absence of the representatives of the European Commission (EC) in several BSEC meetings on transport. Furthermore the WG expressed its hope that the EC will participate in its forthcoming events.

38. The UNECE representative appreciated the level of cooperation between BSEC and UNECE. She welcomed regular consultations of the Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS with high authorities of UNECE. She underlined the importance of BSEC participation in the work of a Group of Experts on Euro-Asian Transport Links. Furthermore, she gave examples of areas where both organizations can benefit from their cooperation. She suggested that the contribution of BSEC to the forthcoming meetings of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee and the Joint ITF/UNECE/WB Seminar on Overcoming Border Crossing Obstacles will be appreciated.

39. The WG stressed that BSEC's work on the Black Sea Ring Highway and the Motorways of the Sea could also benefit from the work of the UNECE Group of Experts on Hinterland Connections of Seaports. In this regard the BSEC Member States were kindly invited to fill up the UNECE questionnaires on Hinterland Connections of Seaports.

40. The Representative of the IRU emphasized that the cooperation between the IRU and BSEC to facilitate road transport in the BSEC region is on a mutually satisfactory level, with the active guidance of the Secretary Generals of both organizations, systematically.

41. The representative of the IRU, among others, also informed the participants about certain decisions of the Meeting of the BSEC Steering Committee on 11 February 2009, which would require active involvement and cooperation of the IRU with the BSEC PERMIS and BSEC-URTA, in particular for drafting the format and rules of usage for a "BSEC Permit" that would be considered at an extraordinary session of the Steering Committee in the first half of 2009.

42. The WG noted with appreciation, the active support of the IRU to the implementation of transport related BSEC Memoranda of Understanding, in particular the MoU on Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods in the BSEC Region.

43. The IRF representative said that since the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding in 2006, IRF has proposed action in the areas of cost-benefit analysis, road management and maintenance, road safety, the public-private partnerships and the environment. The BSEC PERMIS informed that following the request of the WG concerning the Action Plan, proposed by IRF, at the previous meeting the Action Plan was submitted to the BSRH Steering Committee. The Steering Committee requested the BSRH JPTS to consider the ways of cooperation with IRF and invite IRF for future SC meetings.

44. The IRF representative informed that IRF offers a range of options in the area of road safety, including 1, 3 and 5 day training courses tailored to the needs of the beneficiary. IRF underlined that now it is possible to build a road that is 100% ecologically friendly. Public-private partnerships are essential for the realization of the BSRH and IRF is ready to help develop these.

45. The next steps proposed by IRF are for Member States to enter dialogue with IRF on the development of the BSRH and their needs, and the extension of contacts between the IRF and BSRH JPTS.

COOPERATION WITH THE BSEC SECTORAL DIALOGUE PARTNERS (BSEC-URTA, BASPA, BRASS, BINSÄ)

46. The WG welcomed the renewal of the Sectoral Dialogue Partnership status to BASPA, BINSÄ and BRASS by the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.
47. The WG took note in a positive manner the activities of BASPA, BRASS and BSEC-URTA in the region and appreciated their contribution to the work of the BSEC WG on Transport.
48. The BASPA representative addressed the issues of border crossing procedures in sea ports of the Black Sea area which substantially affect the development of transportation in the region including passenger, container and truck transportation. The solution to these problems should be brought to the attention of the highest authorities in the region in order to facilitate transportation.
49. The representative of BRASS proposed establishment of a group of experts for elaboration of recommendations on the development of maritime industry in the BSEC region. He also informed that BRASS is working on the establishment of a web portal which will serve as a database about maritime industry in the Black Sea Region. Furthermore he invited the participants to take part in this project.

CONSIDERATION OF PROJECT PROPOSALS

50. The Working Group took note of the information provided by BSEC PERMIS, regarding the new Manual of Operations of the BSEC Project Development Fund (PDF) and particularly the fact that no project applications could be submitted until the introduction of a revised application format, expectedly in mid-2009, conforming to the new Manual.
51. In addition, the Working Group took note that according to the new Manual, it should define specific priority areas with corresponding timeframes for PDF project proposals, and submit these priorities to the Committee of Senior Officials for consideration.
52. Furthermore, the Working Group took note of the decision of the Steering Committee of the Project Development Fund (Istanbul, 23 January 2009) to cancel the Grant that was previously approved for the project "Economic study for the opening of new international passenger ferry lines between the Black Sea Ports" since one of the partners was not able to sign the Grant Contract.

PREPARING WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2009

53. The WG approved the Work Programme of the BSEC transport activities for 2009. It was agreed that the BSEC Member States may amend the Work Program with other activities if they represent interest for the Member States. Relevant proposals should be sent to the Member States through BSEC PERMIS. The Work Programme as agreed by the WG is attached as Annex III to the present Report.

DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

54. The WG agreed that the date and venue of its next meeting would be communicated to the Member States through the BSEC Secretariat.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING

55. The Working Group adopted the present report for submission to the Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials and the Twentieth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.