

**Intervention du représentant de l'Ambassade de Grèce à la Conférence du 27 mai
2008.**

**Policies and approaches towards and within the Black Sea Region.
Synergies between actors, initiatives and processes:
"a Greek point of view"**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first thank the Bulgarian Embassy for its initiative to organize this conference in Brussels and for its kind invitation to participate to it. I would like also to thank the Egmont Institute. Today's meeting provides us with the opportunity to express our views on the recent achievements in the wider Black Sea area and on the elaboration of the EU policy towards the region.

Greece, recognizing the important role of the wider Black Sea area, strongly supported, right from the outset, the idea of establishing a new EU regional policy for the region. To this end, we have worked persistently, along with all our partners, trying to curb historical fears and deeply-rooted reservations, which, we are convinced,, should not be let to affect the growing tendency towards increased co-operation. Therefore, we supported all the efforts, which aim at strengthening regional co-operation in the wider Black Sea area, provided that there is no overlapping between them. In this respect, a major step was the establishment, last year, of the new EU policy, the "Black Sea Synergy" Its launching took place *in* the ministerial meeting of Kyiv, which brought together, last February 14th, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the countries of the European Union and of the wider Black Sea area. This event opens up a new era of cooperation between the 'European Union and the region, A few months earlier, on June 2007, the decision to grant to the European Commission the observer and dialogue partnership status to the BSEC Organization was for us another milestone of particular significance, since the BSEC Organization is the oldest, most inclusive and fully-fledged regional organization in the area.

Both events demonstrate that the EU has now a strong interest to be present in the Black Sea region and to develop close relations with the BSEC Organization, We cannot hut welcome this' new approach, because Greece, though not a littoral state, maintains a special interest *for* this area, with which my nation has long and important ties.

Allow me now to refer to the role of the BSEC Organization in this part of the world.

Over the past sixteen years, the BSEC Organization has managed to overcome its initial Weaknesses and is today a key factor for stability and prosperity. The Organization has many times proved its usefulness as a forum, where Heads of State and. Prime Ministers, Ministers and parliamentarians can meet and exchange views .on a *wide* range of issues. At the same time, it has provided the appropriate framework to foster intergovernmental cooperation in a variety of fields. Last but *not* the least, it has encouraged coordination and interaction with other formats of sectoral cooperation in the area.

My country considers the EU-B5EC partnership to be an essential component of the broad European architecture. This partnership needs to be comprehensive and wide-ranging, so as to benefit the maximum of States in as many areas of co-operation as possible. In our view, this partnership should be institutionalized, project-oriented and result-driven. It should be "also 'integrated to' the. "Black Sea Synergy", which has been designed to complement, the various existing EU policies in the region. These policies include the European Neighborhood Policy,

the Strategic Partnership with Russia and the accession negotiations with Turkey. Within this framework, we consider that the active implementation of such cooperation will have substantive results in gradually promoting security and stability in a region, where conflicts still exist and the road to effective political dialogue is often hindered.

As the BSEC is gradually transformed into a more flexible, project-oriented and efficient organization, the areas for increased interaction with the-European Union will expand accordingly. In such a context, the implementation of the "Black Sea Synergy" could benefit from sectoral "Black Sea Partnerships", with the involvement of Member States from both sides and various stakeholders from the European Union and the wider Black Sea area. In order to give momentum to the Interaction between the two Organizations, a priority should be given to the concrete projects, which have started to be implemented.

In our view, the construction of the "Black Sea Ring Highway" and the development of the "European Motorways' of the Sea" to the BSEC region are two such projects. They aim to create an integrated, transport infrastructure, interlinking all BSEC Member States by both land and sea and, in the long run, provide linkage with the corresponding European networks. Greece strongly supports the implementation of these projects, which will, some day, change the overall picture of the region. Therefore, we believe that a "Black Sea Partnership on Transport" could be established, in close cooperation with the European Union, in order to facilitate the implementation of the two relevant Memoranda of Understanding and integrate these two major projects into the Pan-European transport networks.

Moreover, similar partnerships could focus on other areas of mutual interest. Environmental protection, energy sources projects, water management, science and technology, as well as communications can be among such areas of cooperation. In all those areas, the accumulated experience within the European Union can be further accrued and put to profit by exploiting synergies with relevant BSEC projects.

In order to promote such actions., every effort should be made to secure financing from both European and International Financial Institutions, In this respect, the Neighborhood Investment Facility - the new financial instrument within the context of the European Neighborhood Policy - will greatly benefit the BSEC Member States, which may wish to submit their projects for co-financing, Greece believes that the BSEC Organization should also be attributed a role in "the implementation of this financial instrument. This can be achieved by promoting closer cooperation with the Black

Sea Trade and Development Bank, which is the financial arm of the Organization,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In concluding, let me once again thank the Embassy of Bulgaria for its initiative to organize this conference and express the readiness of my country to work closely with Bulgaria "and Romania, in order to establish, an enhanced relationship between the European Union and the wider Black Sea area.

Thank you very much for your attention.