

Iran & the 30-year-old BSEC: Prospects for Cooperation

Conference Proceedings

30 May 2022 - Tehran - IPIS

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Acknowledgment

I would like to express our cordial thanks to all who helped make “Iran & the 30-year-old BSEC: Prospects for Cooperation” a successful conference. I have deep pleasure in thanking the Secretariat of the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), particularly Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu, for excellent support prior and during the Conference. Secretary General was so kind to attend our Conference personally.

We are very grateful to BSEC diplomatic community in Tehran who accepted our invitation to attend the Conference. Our special thanks and gratitude go to our distinguished speakers and panelists Mr. Stefan Priesner, UN Resident Coordinator in Tehran; Ambassador Khusrav Noziri, ECO Secretary General; Mr. Shahriar Afandizadeh, Deputy Minister of Road and Urban Development; Ambassador Nikolina Kuneva of Bulgaria; Ambassador Mirela-Carmen Grecu of Romania; Ambassador Dragan Todorovi’ of Serbia; Mr. Human Fathi, Director General for International Affairs and Specialized Agencies, Ministry of Agriculture; Mr. Fatih Sener, Vice-President of BSEC Union of Road Transit Association (URTA); Mrs. Leila Ajdari, Director General for Marketing and Development of Foreign Tourism, Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts; and Mr. Hasan Esfandiar, Director General for International Operations, Iranian Red Crescent. Mr. Farzad Mehrani, the then vice-president of Iran’s Chamber is acknowledged for his role as the moderator of the second panel.

Several persons from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and BSEC Secretariat deserve special recognition

due to their outstanding role in the organization of the Conference: Messers Aboulghasem Tahmasebi, Director for Multilateral Economic Organizations, Seyed Rouhollah Kamel, Mousa Khosravi Moghaddam, Saleh Niazi from Foreign Ministry of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Mr. Alexei Nistrean, Executive Manager of BSEC Secretariat in charge of relations with BSEC Observers and Sectoral Dialogue Partners (SDPs), and Ms. Evgenia Logiotatou, Secretary to the Secretary General of BSEC.

The financial, logistic and organizational support of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS) is highly appreciated. We would like to express our sincere thanks to Ambassador Mohammad Fath'ali, Deputy Foreign Minister for Financial and Administrative Affairs; Dr. Mohammad Hasan Sheikholeslami, the IPIS President; Dr. Seyed Majid Ghafele Bashi, the IPIS Vice-President for Research; and Mr. Behrooz Aghaei, the IPIS Vice-President for Executive Affairs.

And last but not the least, I am obliged to express, on behalf of colleagues and organizers, our deep gratitude to Ambassador Mahdi Safari, Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy, for his full support and valuable guidance, as well as confidence bestowed upon us. His leadership across the whole process is deeply acknowledged.

Mr. Bahram Taheri, Director of Research and Publishing Department, (IPIS) and his team, as well as the publishing company, are thanked for this excellent product of the Conference.

Seyed Jalaedin Alavi Sabzevari
DG for Multilateral and International Economic Cooperation
MFA-Tehran

**Foreword by H.E. Dr. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Minister
for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran**



The 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) provided an opportunity for the officials from the Islamic Republic of Iran’s public and private sectors and the Secretariat of BSEC as well as ambassadors of BSEC member countries to get together for exchange of views on the prospects of mutual cooperation.

Relying on ancient history, outstanding geographical location and abundant natural and energy resources, the Black Sea countries have chosen the approach of “result-oriented and constructive cooperation” by establishing the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation thereby welcoming “partnership with other interested states” in the process of intra-BSEC cooperation. Accordingly, the Islamic Republic of Iran has embarked on

cooperation with this important regional organization in the form of sectoral dialogue partnership in the recent past.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has put the expansion of relations with neighbouring and regional countries at the top of its economic diplomacy. Strengthening multilateral economic mechanisms and arrangements is in the frontline of our economic diplomacy. In this regard, we would like to uplift level of cooperation with BSEC. The international conference “Iran and the 30-year-old BSEC: prospects for cooperation” has exposed the dimensions of cooperation in the coming years.

The existing and potential capacities of the Islamic Republic of Iran in economic and connectivity contexts are available for synergy, economic growth and development of the nations of the region, including the Black Sea region. Iran’s abundant natural and human resources along with its outstanding location in West Asia, access to the international waters and regional and global markets through Persian Gulf, Oman Sea and significant added values for its bilateral and multilateral partners, including in the framework of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization.

I would like to thank organizers of the Conference, especially the BSEC Secretary General, Ambassador Lazar Comanescu, and Ambassador Mahdi Safari, Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy and their colleagues who made this conference a successful one.

**Foreword by Ambassador Lazar Comanescu,
Secretary General of Organization of Black Sea
Economic Cooperation (BSEC)**



Dear readers,

It was a particular honour and pleasure for me to participate in the special and most welcome high- level event organized by the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in dedication to the prospects of cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and BSEC. The organization of the conference in the very year of the 30th Anniversary of BSEC and in dedication to it as well speaks by itself about the importance and value that Iran attaches to the cooperation with the BSEC. Indeed, since the very beginning, that is since 2009 when this cooperation has

been launched, Iran has been a most active Sectoral Dialogue Partner of BSEC.

While our cooperation so far has been focusing mainly on the areas of Trade, Banking and Finance, Energy, Transport, Agriculture, Healthcare, Environmental Protection and Tourism, the conference in Tehran of the 30th of May clearly showed that there is real potential for further extending it and I do appreciate Iran's interest and willingness to explore new avenues for enhancing the collaboration with the BSEC. The concrete ideas and suggestions put forward in this respect during the conference deserve due consideration. I therefore very much welcome the initiative of dedicating a special book to the Conference in Tehran. Such a publication would not only help enriching the knowledge about Iran-BSEC cooperation but would also serve as basis for devising new ways and means for its further advancement."

**Foreword by Ambassador Mahdi Safari,
Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy**



Foreign Ministry of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the BSEC Secretariat jointly organized “Iran & 30-year-old BSEC: Prospects for Cooperation” in commemoration of BSEC 30th anniversary; a clear demonstration of Iran’s firm commitment, and a step forward, to promote multilateral economic diplomacy.

Iran has been long a “sectoral dialogue partner” in BSEC, rated among the most active ones by the BSEC Secretariat. The Tehran Conference explored further avenues of collaboration between BSEC and the Islamic Republic of Iran. It also raised awareness and strengthened ownership among stakeholders to the extent that Iran and BSEC organization are now more than ever closer. There is no doubt that the more our regions are connected, the

more Iran and Black Sea nations will be better-off.

The Islamic Republic of Iran bridges South and East Asia and Indian Ocean regions to Central Asia, Caucasus and Europe, including through Persian Gulf, Caspian Sea and Black Sea regions. This makes “connectivity” in terms of transit, trade, energy, food security, ICT and tourism a high priority and necessity for any roadmap and plan for future cooperation with BSEC and its Member States. Discussions in this Conference lucidly alluded to this huge potential. The BSEC and Iran will certainly be better-off if and when concrete partnerships are in place.

I am obliged to thank those who contributed to this historic event, including my colleagues in the Foreign Ministry, BSEC Secretary General Comanescu and his team, and IPIS.

For those from Iran and Black Sea countries, who could not attend and benefit from “Iran & 30-year-old BSEC: Prospects for Cooperation” conference, this publication will be of much help.

BSEC at a Glance

The Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) came into existence as a unique and promising model of multilateral political and economic initiative with the signing of the Istanbul Summit Declaration and the Bosphorus Statement by the Heads of State and Government of the countries in the region, on 25 June 1992.

Aiming at fostering interaction and harmony among its members, as well as to ensure peace, stability and prosperity, encouraging friendly and good-neighborly relations in the Black Sea region, today BSEC serves as a forum for cooperation in a wide range of areas for its 13 Member States: Albania, Armenia, Republic of Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, North Macedonia, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine.

The BSEC Headquarters - the Permanent International Secretariat of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC PERMIS) - was established in March 1994 in Istanbul.

Agriculture and agro-industry, banking and finance, combating organized crime, culture, customs matters, education, emergency assistance, energy, environmental protection, exchange of statistical data and economic information, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, information and communication technologies, institutional renewal and good governance, science and technology, SMEs, tourism, trade and economic development and transport are among the main fields of cooperation within the framework of the Organization.

Facts about the BSEC Region:

- BSEC covers a geography encompassing the territories of the Black Sea littoral States, the Balkans and the Caucasus with an area of nearly 20 million square kilometers. The BSEC region is located on two continents;
- It represents a region of more than 350 million people. The overall trade turnover of the BSEC region is in the range of 1.5 trillion USD

and the nominal combined GDP around 2.95 trillion USD.

- After the Persian Gulf region, it is the second-largest source of oil and natural gas along with its rich proven reserves of minerals, metals and other natural resources;
- It is becoming Europe's major transport and energy transfer corridor.

Principles and Objectives:

- to act in a spirit of friendship and good neighborliness and enhance mutual respect and confidence, dialogue and cooperation among the Member States;
- to further develop and diversify bilateral and multilateral cooperation on the basis of the principles and rules of international law;
- to act for improving the business environment and promoting individual and collective initiative of the enterprises and companies directly involved in the process of economic cooperation;
- to develop economic collaboration in a manner not contravening the inter-national obligations of the Member States including those deriving from their membership to international organizations or institutions of an integrative or other nature and not preventing the promotion of their relations with third parties;
- to take into account the specific economic conditions and interests of the Member States involved; f) to further encourage the participation in the BSEC process of economic cooperation of other interested states, international economic and financial institutions as well as enterprises and companies.

Membership in BSEC:

The BSEC is open to any State which desires to become a Member and is deemed to be able and willing to fulfill the principles and objectives of the BSEC as set forth in the present Charter

Programme of the Conference



08:30–09:00	Registration
09:00–10:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opening Session• National Anthem and Holy Quran Recitation• Welcoming Remarks• Video Clip• Statement by H.E. Mr. Stefan Priesner, United Nations Resident Coordinator in the Islamic Republic of Iran• Statement by H.E. Mr. Lazar Comanescu, Secretary General of the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)• Statement By H.E. Khusrav Noziri, Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)• Inaugural Statement by H.E. Mr. Mahdi Safari, Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy
10:00–10:15	Break

<p>10:15-11:45</p>	<p>Panel 1: Iran and BSEC Region: Prospects for Wider Connectivity</p> <p>Black Sea region is a major route for global transport and energy transfer. Iran is bridging Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean to Caspian and Black Sea Regions. Its transport and transit network is also connecting Chinese and East Asian export and import markets to those of European and Black Sea countries. This panel was intended to discuss existing and new initiatives and frameworks for harnessing maximum mutual benefits from wider connectivity between Iran and Black Sea region. Panelists from BSEC diplomatic community in Tehran and Iranian officials also Considered connectivity in terms of Energy, Information and Communication Technology, Tourism and Culture.</p> <p>Present in the Panel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambassador Mahdi Safari, Deputy Foreign Minister • Ambassador Lazar Comanescu (Secretary General of BSEC) <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Shahriar Afandizadeh, Deputy Minister of Road and Urban Development of Iran • Ambassador Nikolina Kuneva (Republic of Bulgaria) • Ambassador Mirela-Carmen Grecu (Romania) • Mr. Human Fathi, Director General for International Affairs and Specialized Agencies, Ministry of Agriculture Jihad <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi, DG for Multilateral and International Economic Cooperation, MFA
<p>11:45-12:00</p>	<p>Break</p>

<p>12:00-13:30</p>	<p>Panel 2: Iran-BSEC Agenda: Non-state Entities and Private Sector’s Contribution</p> <p>Important role of private sector for realization of BSEC goals and objective has been widely acknowledged. Private sector and non-state companies and entities in Iran have shown great impacts on realization of national development plans and economic diplomacy of the Country over the years. This panel provided an opportunity for exchange of views on potential role to be played by private sectors in the Islamic Republic of Iran and BSEC region in realization of an envisaged Iran-BSEC Agenda. Featuring panelists from public and private sectors, the Panel addressed areas such as multimodal transport, trade and Business, food security, climate and emergency measures, etc.</p> <p>Present in the Panel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambassador Mahdi Safari, Deputy Foreign Minister • Ambassador Lazar Comanescu (Secretary General of BSEC) <p>Panelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambassador Dragan Todorović (Republic of Serbia) • Mr. Fatih Şener, Vice-President, BSEC Union of Road Transit Association (URTA) • Mrs. Leila Ajdari, Director General for Marketing and Development of Foreign Tourism, Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts • Mr. Hasan Esfandiar, Director General for International Operations, Iranian Red Crescent <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Farzad Mehrani, Vice-President for International Relations, Iran Chamber of Commerce
<p>13:30</p>	<p>Closing (followed by Prayer and Lunch)</p>

Summary of the Proceedings

On the eve of 30th anniversary of establishment of the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in coordination with the BSEC Secretariat, organized an international conference “Iran & the 30-year-old BSEC: Prospects for Cooperation” on 30 May 2022 at the Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS).

The Event intended to explore existing and potential opportunities and capacities for enhanced cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran, as BSEC sectoral dialogue partner (SDP), and BSEC in areas such as transport, energy, trade, tourism, culture, agriculture and food security, etc. The Event also sought awareness rising about BSEC among Iranian line-ministries and private sector. The half-day event was structured in an opening plenary and two panels.

Tehran Event was attended by officials from Iran’s line ministries and private sectors activists as well as Tehran-based ambassadors and officials from BSEC member states, observers and SDPs, along with Tehran-based United Nations and other international organizations officials, academia and civil society representatives.

In the opening session, Mr. Stefan Priesner, UN Resident Coordinator in Tehran, Mr. Lazar Comanescu, Secretary General of BSEC, and Mr. Khusrav Noziri, Secretary General of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) delivered statements. The

inaugural statement was made by Ambassador Mahdi Safari, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy.

The first Panel, *"Iran and BSEC Region: Prospects for Wider Connectivity"*, featured high level panelists, including Mrs. Nikolina Kuneva, Ambassador of Republic of Bulgaria, Mrs. Mirela-Carmen Grecu, Ambassador of Romania, Mr. Shahriar Afandizadeh, Deputy Minister of Road and Urban Development of Iran, and Mr. Human Fathi, Director General for International Affairs and Specialized Agencies of Ministry of Agriculture Jihad who made their introductory remarks and shared views on ways and means to establish workable relationships between Iran and BSEC with a view to improving the transport, energy, ICT and cultural connectivity between two regions. This was followed by Secretary General Comanescu and Deputy Foreign Minister Safari's commentaries. The panelists then answered questions from the audience. The panel was moderated by Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi, DG for Multilateral and International Economic Cooperation, MFA.

The second Panel, *"Iran-BSEC Agenda: Non-state Entities and Private Sector's Contribution"*, also hosted high level panelists, including Mr. Dragan Todorović, Ambassador of Republic of Serbia, Mr. Fatih Şener, Vice-President of Union of Road Transport Association in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Region (BSEC-URTA), Mrs. Leila Ajdari, Director General for Marketing and Development of Foreign Tourism, Ministry of Cultural Heritage,

Tourism and Handicrafts of Iran, and Mr. Hasan Esfandiari, Director General for International Operations, Iranian Red Crescent Society. The panelists shared their views on how cooperation between Iran and BSEC can benefit from private and non-state sectors involvement, particularly in the areas such as tourism, multimodal transport, trade, food security and emergency and disaster situations.

Deputy Foreign Minister Safari and Secretary General Comanescu then made comments on panelists' views and shared their own viewpoints on the topic. The panelists and the two discussants then responded to the questions raised from among the audiences. The panel was moderated by Mr. Farzad Mehrani, vice-President of Iran Chamber of Commerce.

The Tehran Conference on "Iran & the 30-year-old BSEC: Prospects for Cooperation" provided an opportunity to jointly explore possibilities to upgrade level of cooperation between two sides and facilitate bilateral partnership. Iran's and BSEC authorities agreed to continue such joint initiatives.

On the sidelines of the Event, publications and handicrafts were exhibited by Iranian publishers and artists.

The Conference was livestreamed through BSEC website.



Islamic Republic of Iran
Ministry of Foreign Affairs



ایران و سازمان سی ساله همکاری اقتصادی دریای سیاه: چشم اندازها برای همکاری
Iran & the 30-year-old BSEC: Prospects for Cooperation (30 May 2022- IPIS)

(۹ خرداد ۱۴۰۱ - مرکز مطالعات سیاسی و بین المللی)



Opening Session

In the opening session, Mr. Stefan Priesner, UN Resident Coordinator in Iran, Mr. Lazar Comanescu, Secretary General of Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), and Mr. Khusrav Noziri, Secretary General of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) delivered opening statements. The inaugural speech was made by Ambassador Mahdi Safari, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy.



Mr. Stefan Priesner, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Iran, as the first speaker, while referring to connectivity and interaction as priorities in the Black Sea region, called the economic diplomacy as an important step for building stronger partnerships and dialogues and greater regional understanding. He underscored cooperation with regional organizations as an core area of UN activities and referred to the ongoing cooperation and joint projects between BSEC and UN agencies, funds and programmes such as UNECE, UNDP and UNIDO focusing mainly on cross-border transportation, environment and support to SMEs.

He highlighted global consequences of the Ukraine crisis such as global food insecurity as well as economic recovery from the COVID pandemic as critical global challenges required to be addressed at multilateral levels. In this context, he emphasized on the importance of sub-regional and regional cooperation as the building blocks for effective multilateralism and achieving effective sustainable development.



Mr. Lazar Comanescu, the BSEC Secretary General praised the Islamic Republic of Iran as one of the most active Sectoral Dialogue Partner (SDP) of BSEC since 2009 and appreciated its keen interest to explore further avenues of collaboration with BSEC. He announced Tehran Conference as the first event of its kind held on the occasion of the 30th BSEC anniversary within the big BSEC family (Members, Observers and SDPs).

Referring to the current situation in the Black Sea region, the Secretary General expressed hope that reason and wisdom will prevail as soon as possible so that the war and the loss of innocent people will stop and a solution fully compliant with the international law will be found without further delay to bring a long overdue end to hostilities that have caused such immense human suffering and colossal material destruction.

By briefing the audiences about the BSEC history along with necessary measures to be taken for revitalization of the Organization, Mr. Lazar Comanescu emphasized on the urgently

needed restoration of an environment conducive to constructive economic engagement for the benefit of the whole region. He also pointed out that there is room for further substantiating the interaction and cooperation with the Observers and SDPs. He further informed on the initial work for redrafting the BSEC Economic Agenda that will guide endeavors for the next decade on how to further streamline and increase efficiency in BSEC.



Mr. Khusrav Noziri, Secretary General of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), drew attentions to the various commonalties between ECO and BSEC, focusing on the social and economic characteristics of member states. He called the ECO region and the Black Sea region as immediate neighbors with great potential for cooperation, especially in transport sector.

ECO Secretary General pointed out that both regions can play complementary roles through extending transport corridors to connect Europe to Central Asia, West Asia, South Asia and China. He specifically referred to railway corridors such as Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan- Iran (KTI), Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) and Istanbul-Almaty and Bandar Abbas-Almaty as well as road corridors such as ITI corridor.

He also expressed confidence that the existing spirit of cooperation would grow in the years to come and would further strengthen the regional cooperation in the area of transport and regional connectivity.



Mr. Mahdi Safari, Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy delivered the inaugural statement. He described Iran-BSEC partnerships and exchanges as a valuable contribution to wider global connectivity and stated that South and East Asia and Indian Ocean regions can be linked to Central Asia, Caucasus and Europe through Persian Gulf, Iran, Caspian Sea and Black Sea. This is not an alternative but a complementary route vis-a-vis other regional and global connectivity arrangements.

Ambassador Safari further elaborated on how Iran's outstanding location in Persian Gulf, Oman Sea, Indian Ocean and Caspian Sea, as well as its proximity to India, China, Central Asia and Caucasus, has made Iran an added-value to any sort of partnership with Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation. Iran has a great potential to offer to interested potential partners, including the BSEC, in the area of multimodal transport and transit, commodity trade (including food and agricultural products), energy trade and transit, tourism and culture, emergency assistance

cooperation, etc.

He concluded his opening remarks by saying “We are considering promotion of our institutional relations with the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation. This Conference will certainly lead us to right path. In any case, BSEC Secretariat and membership can rely on our full preparedness for cooperation whether in the capacity of sectoral dialogue partner or else.”

Panel One: “Iran and BSEC Region: Prospects for Wider Connectivity”



The first Panel was organized under the title of “Iran and BSEC Region: Prospects for Wider Connectivity” where high-level panelists, including Mrs. Nikolina Kuneva, Ambassador of Bulgaria, Mrs. Mirela-Carmen Grecu, Ambassador of Romania, Mr. Shahriar Afandizadeh, Deputy Minister of Road and Urban Development of Iran, and Mr. Human Fathi, Director General for International Affairs and Specialized Agencies of Ministry of Agriculture-Jahad shared their views on ways and means to establish workable Iran-BSEC relationships with a view to improving the connectivity between two regions. Mr. Lazar Comanescu, Secretary General of BSEC, and Ambassador Mahdi Safari, Iran’s Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy were also present in the panel as discussant.

The panelists then answered questions from the audience. The panel was moderated by Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi, Director General for Multilateral and International Economic Cooperation of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran.



The first panelist, **Mr. Shahriar Afandizadeh**, Deputy Minister of Road and Urban Development of Iran, described non-physical barriers and problems related to trade and transport as one of the major obstacles for promotion of trade in the region. He underscored that the promotion of trade between countries requires the ease of dialogue among nations and civilizations of the region, and only if mutual recognition between cultures and civilizations happen, there would be hope for enhanced trade in the region and beyond.

Concerning the economic and trade cohesion and value chain formation in the region, he stressed on the need for synergistic efforts by Black Sea region and Iran through combining resources to create a development corridor and joint productions and logistic hubs in the chain of advanced logistics centers.

He called Iran's multimodal transit network as an integrated and cohesive network of transit corridors and routes which connect Iran to the surrounding areas from north to south and east to west. Mr. Afandizadeh requested for Iran-BSEC joint action for designing a multimodal transit network in the region in order to remove the non-physical barriers and to create an integrated development corridor.



The next panelist, **Mrs. Nikolina Kuneva**, Ambassador of Bulgaria in Iran, stated that participation in BSEC activities is an important element of Bulgaria's regional policy aimed at strengthening confidence, stability and security in the wider Black Sea region, which is a prerequisite for achieving economic growth, competitiveness and prosperity.

Given the strategic location and vast economic potential of Black Sea region, she informed the Panel that the development of transport infrastructure and achieving an optimal level of integration of transport networks are at the top of BSEC priorities where attention must be paid to transport projects within the Trans-European Network and the Euro-Asian corridors. However, in order to achieve sustainable mobility and high efficiency, our activities should be aimed at overcoming the key challenges related to infrastructure modernization, implementation of intelligent transport systems, improving the competitiveness of transport companies and reducing the impact on the environment.

Concerning the importance of collaboration with Iran, She said that Bulgaria has set in its transport policy a number of measures to improve transport connectivity with the neighboring countries and regions, including Iran. With joint efforts, we may

contribute to the further development of transport in BSEC and the establishment of effective trade routes.

She expressed her view that Iran-BSEC partnership could create opportunities for initiatives of mutual interest, especially in the field of transit, culture, tourism, environment protection, and people-to-people contacts. The geographical location of Iran and the active actions of its administration in introducing variety of new transport corridors shows the potential in this respect.



Mrs. Mirela-Carmen Grecu,

Ambassador of Romania in Iran, was the next panelist who stated that the Black Sea region is a topic of priority in Romania's foreign policy. As a founding Member of BSEC, Romania's activities aim at strengthening of democratic stability and prosperity through enhancing cohesion via regional projects as well as by an inclusive approach towards dialogue and cooperation among BSEC Member States. An important part of Romania's engagement is connected to constantly supporting and encouraging a solid interaction with relevant international partners, primarily European Union, as the greatest donor and main economic partner of BSEC economies.

She informed the Panel that Romania has promoted inter-connectivity within the region, with special focus on transport as main sectoral priority. She also said: We have also engaged ourselves in the soft connectivity issues, such as environment, climate change and sustainable development goals.

Ambassador Grecu emphasized that strengthening of BSEC international profile is one of the keys to unlocking the regional economic potential - that cannot be done without strengthening an important core pillar of BSEC - its partnership policy. In this course, Romania grants importance to BSEC observers and sectoral

dialogue partners. She specifically mentioned the Islamic Republic of Iran as a long time valued Sectorial Dialogue Partner of BSEC, one that Romania appreciates.

In conclusion, she highlighted that BSEC cooperation is possible only if the actions of its Member States are based on shared values – embodied in BSEC Charter – and on the common belief in working together to build a stronger, more peaceful and more prosperous region.



The last Panelist, **Mr. Human Fathi**, Director General for International Affairs and Specialized Agencies, Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, elaborated in detail the food security as one important goal in the BSEC economic agenda. He further explained about vast potential and advantages Iran can offer in many areas related to BSEC economic agenda, including agriculture-related production, research, technology, etc. Mr. Fathi expressed Iranian side interest to develop and promote partnership and cooperation with BSEC in agriculture and food security.

The Panelist considered the geographical proximity of Iran and Black Sea region, the two very important hubs, as an important factor for regional and international transit, particularly transit of food products between Asia and Europe. Mr. Fathi concluded his introductory remarks by highlighting that cooperation between Iran and BSEC will provide more possibility for increasing the volume of agricultural products trade between Black Sea region and Iran, and contribute to the promotion of food security in Europe.

The Panel was followed by rounds of Questions and answers where panelists, BSEC Secretary General and Deputy Foreign Minister responded to the questions from the audience.

Panel Two: “Iran-BSEC Agenda: Non-State Entities and Private Sector’s Contribution”



The second Panel also hosted high level panelists, including Mr. Dragan Todorović, Ambassador of Republic of Serbia, Mr. Fatih Şener, Vice-President of Union of Road Transport Association in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Region (BSEC-URTA), Mrs. Leila Ajdari, Director General for Marketing and Development of Foreign Tourism, Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of Iran, and Mr. Hasan Esfandiari, Director General for International Operations, Iranian Red Crescent Society.

The panelists shared their views on how cooperation between Iran and BSEC can benefit from private sector involvement, particularly in the areas such as tourism, multimodal transport, trade, food security and emergency and disaster situations.

Also present in the Panel were Ambassador Mahdi Safari, Iran’s Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy and Mr. Lazar Comanescu, Secretary General of BSEC who served as discussants. The Panelists were followed by comments and questions from the audience. The Panel was moderated by Mr. Farzad Mehrani, Vice-President for International Relations of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Mines, Industry and Agriculture.



The first panelist, **Mr. Dragan Todorović**, Ambassador of Republic of Serbia in Iran, began his remarks by referring to the huge potential of the Black Sea region for economic cooperation. He reviewed the history of realization of potential of cooperation in BSEC over the past 30 years and asserted that it is now more than ever, the Member States could use every opportunity to enhance their relations and find common grounds. Serbia always believes that one of the main advantages of regional cooperation initiatives, such as BSEC, is to create a forum in which countries could bridge their differences through areas of common interest.

Ambassador Todorović stressed on the need for efforts in inter-governmental international organizations for enhancing the role of the private sector and entrepreneurship. This potential should be fully realized in the Black Sea region. He added that “That’s why Serbia, together with Iran as BSEC’s SDP, actively participated in Tehran Conference for strengthening mutual cooperation. Serbia is an open and reliable partner for this cooperation, as I am sure our Iranian friends are too.”

In evaluating the situation in the region, he enumerated maintaining economic stability, the uncontrollable rise in inflation as a result of the 2009 global economic crisis, the Covid-19

pandemic, problems in supply chains as well as energy and food crises emanating from Ukraine conflict as challenges in region. He stressed on the need for international cooperation and mutual understanding and tolerance to mitigate these challenges.

In another part of his remarks, he elaborated the obstacles for enhancing economic cooperation between Black Sea region and Asian partners, including trade and non-trade barriers, procedures and regulations, and proposed free trade agreements and memoranda on trade and investment facilitation as good start for overcoming such barriers and enhancing cooperation through multilateralism.



As the second panelist, **Mr. Fatih Şener**, Vice-President of Union of Road Transport Association in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Region (BSEC-URTA) presented a brief history about the Union. He further expressed satisfaction on the observership of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Mines, Industry and Agriculture (ICCIMA) in BSEC-URTA and highlighted Iran's

location as a transit gateway to Central Asia, Caucasus and Persian Gulf. He underlined the necessity of channeling of transport flows, in the current global logistic chains, to the BSEC region and Iran.

Refereeing to the challenges made by COVID-19 Pandemic and war situation in the Black Sea region, Mr. Şener emphasized on imperative of working together, creating strong logistic chains in the BSEC region and connect it with Iran's value added logistics and transit possibilities.

In conclusion, he elaborated on the digitalization of road permits project with contribution of 8 BSEC member states aiming at extending the BSEC permit to Eurasia, and the electronic visa project for professional drivers as the two ongoing projects run by BSEC-URTA in Black Sea region.



Mrs. Leila Ajdari, Director General for Marketing and Development of Foreign Tourism, Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of Iran, was the third panelist who defined tourism as a potential sector to provide inclusive growth, create jobs, reduce poverty and foster sustainable development and peace. She referred

to Iran strategic location which connects the Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean and Caspian Sea to Black Sea region through multimodal transport corridors, as a huge potential for facilitation and promotion of tourism cooperation. In this course, she announced that the Black Sea region has been envisioned in Iran’s roadmap of tourism cooperation. She seized the opportunity and called this event as a timely occasion for promotion of bilateral and multilateral collaboration.

Having an analytical view to existing tourism cooperation between Iran and BSEC countries and the need for a long-term strategy for tourism cooperation, she elaborated on the current status of tourism cooperation of Iran with Russia, Türkiye, Bulgaria, and Romania and presented some proposals for expansion of tourism collaboration with other BSEC member states.



The last panelist, **Mr. Hasan Esfandiar**, Director General for International Operations, Iranian Red Crescent Society, started his remarks with an historical overview of Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) where he explained the structure, missions and functions of IRCS as well as its contribution to the promotion of economic cooperation, national development and humanitarian diplomacy in Iran over the past years.

Among other issues, he underlined the climate change as a new challenging phenomenon for Iran and the world over past decades and the urgent need to manage the growing risk of climate change through early warning and other necessary measures. He also raised the refugees and immigrants issues as other challenges for global society and explained the efforts made by the Islamic Republic of Iran to manage humanitarian crises. In conclusion, he described some joint actions between IRCS and the national societies of Red Cross and Red Crescent in Black Sea region with direct impacts on bilateral economic ties.

Closing Session

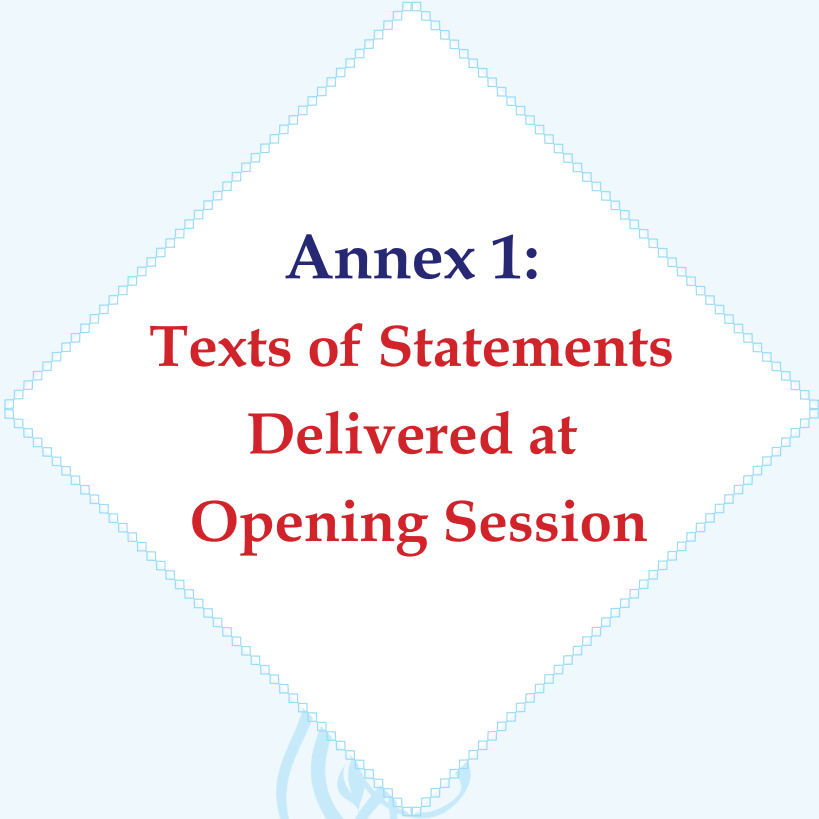


The Event was concluded by closing remarks made by Ambassador Mahdi Safari, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister and BSEC Secretary General, Ambassador Lazar Comanescu.

The Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy appraised the Conference as an important step towards enhanced cooperation between Iran and BSEC. He reconfirmed Iran's desire and readiness to work closely with BSEC as sectoral dialogue partner, or in new capacity as observer or even as full member. He reminded that Iran has already engaged in cooperation with the Black Sea region in sectors such as transit, connecting India, China and other countries to Black Sea region through Persian Gulf. Our routes to Black Sea are complementary to other routes. We

should focus jointly on capacity development and development of transport and transit infrastructure. Deputy Foreign Minister summarized some encouraging findings from two panels and asserted that there are looming prospects for enhanced inter-connectivity between our regions in areas such as transit, tourism and trade.

In his concluding remarks, BSEC Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu appreciated the initiative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to organize this fruitful conference aiming at development of mutual cooperation between Iran and the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation. He highlighted Iran's vast capacities, especially goods and energy transit, which he had also raised in his talks with Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Minister for Economic Diplomacy. He called Iran's public and private sectors as potential and natural partners for BSEC and expressed readiness for further bilateral talks on identifying next steps for future partnerships and engagement.



Annex 1:
Texts of Statements
Delivered at
Opening Session



Statement by
Mr. Stefan Priesner,
United Nations Resident Coordinator in Iran

Your Excellencies,
Secretary General Lazar Comanescu,
Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy, Mr. Mahdi Safari,
Members of the diplomatic community, esteemed representatives of ministries of I.R. Iran

Thank you for convening this dialogue on economic cooperation in the Black Sea region in a challenging time for the region and the world.

I congratulate BSEC on its 30 year anniversary since it was founded in 1992. I am honoured to be part of this discussion with so many distinguished members of Government and diplomats.

In prioritizing building connectivity and interaction in the region, I see economic diplomacy as an important step to building stronger partnerships and dialogue and greater regional understanding.

A central tenet of the United Nations across all areas of its work and in engagement in every country and in every region is cooperation, dialogue and partnership.

Indeed, cooperation with regional organizations is at the core of UN activities and enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

Our United Nations founders understood that no single organization can alone ensure peace, security, and development in a complex and rapidly changing world.

Indeed, it requires partnership across all levels – from the local to the regional to the global.

As Resident Coordinator in the Islamic Republic of Iran, I represent the United Nations Secretary-General on sustainable development and part of my role is to foster the partnerships and cooperation required to achieve development goals and target.

Around the world, a more effective United Nations depends on stronger and deeper cooperation with regional organizations.

In Iran, we are right now almost ready to agree on the UNSDCF, the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. Part of this is cross-border collaboration and it is an area we are already working on and we would like to explore what more can be done.

I would also like to recognize His Excellency Secretary General of ECO Ambassador Noziri for the important cooperation ECO undertakes in the region and this is a partnership that the UN wants to further strengthen.

The several cooperation agreements and joint projects that we have with BSEC in the region - from UN organizations such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and UNDP and UNIDO are testament to the increasing depth and breadth of our relationship – notably in the areas such as cross-border transportation, environment and support to SMEs.

In April this year, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe held a high-level Regional Forum for Sustainable Development. We thank His Excellency Ambassador Lazar Comanescu, Secretary General of BSEC for participating in the event.

The United Nations Deputy Secretary-General spoke to open the forum and highlighted that right now our ability to achieve inclusive, sustainable and resilient development hangs in the balance.

**Excellencies,
ladies and gentlemen,**

The war in Ukraine is causing human suffering on a massive scale and the ramifications are global as across the world, supply chains have been disrupted.

But we also must protect our development agenda as the region seeks a pathway for peace. If anything, the current situation globally demands even more focus on supercharging just and sustainable energy, food and digital transitions to advance sustainable development.

As an immediate priority, hundreds of millions of people rely on Ukrainian grain to survive. A solution has to be urgently found to avert a global food crisis of potentially catastrophic proportions. This is quoting the head of WFP David Beasley.

At the same time, we are recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic has been a painful but powerful

reminder that cooperation is absolutely essential to address the multiple challenges we face.

As we build back in every part of the globe from the effects of COVID-19 we know that we cannot simply work on quick short-term fixes. We must cooperate to build back in a way that serves the most vulnerable people.

And cooperation will also bring other benefits - the ones that we can reap by working together towards more environmentally sustainable, prosperous and inclusive economies.

As we seek to re-launch our economies, we should be mindful of the need to preserve natural capital and avoid the continued pressure on natural resources.

On the one hand, the BSEC region has become more energy efficient: GDP produced per unit of energy used has increased by around 20 per cent over the last decade. On the other hand this is not yet sufficient to contain environmental damage.

As in other parts of the world, we continue to use too many resources and to generate too much waste, which is not yet appropriately treated. We need to work together to develop innovative solutions that make possible a more sustainable use of resources.

We need to keep our focus, to ensure we keep the pace and raise our ambition on climate change. Instead of the required global 45 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030, emissions are projected to increase by almost 14 per cent this decade. It is very clear that we

must do more.

The second challenge I would like to highlight is our need to advance digital connectivity.

We have seen great progress across the region in harnessing the potential of digital tools in education, work and health.

But we also see there are large gaps within and between countries in terms of how readily people can access.

I see that the discussion today will also look at how the business community and private sector can become more engaged in regional cooperation.

Indeed this is an important element of addressing inequalities in access to services, to technology and also to building truly inclusive, resilient and inclusive economies.

In concluding, I come back to the main theme of the discussions today which is partnership and dialogue.

No matter the challenges, we cannot address them alone and our partnerships must be local, regional, global and they must be wide ranging.

In a context where we all recognize our shared problems and the obvious benefits of joint concerted action, subregional and regional cooperation are the building blocks of effective multilateralism and achieving effective sustainable development.

Thank you

Statement by
Mr. Lazar Comanescu,
Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS

**Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am really pleased to be back in Teheran, this time as BSEC PERMIS SG. I am all the more pleased and honored as I am here today upon the kind invitation of the Iranian MFA to participate in an event dedicated to a very special moment for my Organization.

Indeed 2022 is the year of the 30th Anniversary of BSEC and we in the PERMIS highly appreciate and value this initiative of our distinguished hosts. It speaks by itself about the importance and attention they attach to the cooperation with BSEC and I in my turn would like to stress that Iran has been a most active Sectoral Dialogue Partner of BSEC. I am confident that our cooperation dating back to 2009 when Iran became our partner will be further strengthened in the years to come.

While cooperation in the past was focused mainly on the areas of Trade, Banking and Finance, Energy, Transport, Agriculture, Healthcare, Environmental protection and Tourism, we very much appreciate Iran's keen interest during the last year in particular to explore further avenues of collaboration with the BSEC. And

I would say this initiative today is one concrete outcome of this expressed interest.

So once again my heartfelt thanks for this wonderful opportunity to be with you today. We are also most grateful for the comprehensive program of our visit to Iran. Dear Director General Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari much obliged to you for all that!

In fact, today's event is the first of this kind organized in dedication to the 30th Anniversary, inside the enlarged family of BSEC (i.e. BSEC MS, BSEC Obs and BSEC SDPs) and we appreciate it all the more so.

I hope others will feel stimulated in following this example so that the Anniversary is appropriately marked in as many places as possible even if, for reasons we all know, the current situation in our region does not bode well with the objectives of our Organization for regional and international peace, stability and prosperity.

It is most unfortunate that today we seek to acknowledge the achievements of our Organization during the last three decades and chart the course for the future against the backdrop of the tragic turn of events in our region.

I do however hope that reason and wisdom will prevail so that the war and loss of innocent lives in UA stops and a solution fully compliant with the international law will be found without further delay to bring a long overdue end to hostilities that have caused

such immense human suffering and colossal material destruction.

The urgently needed restoration of an environment conducive once again to constructive economic engagement for the benefit of the whole region would enable the activity of our Organization, as well, to be carried out appropriately, including in terms of the Anniversary and celebration, all the more so as there are significant achievements over the past three decades that deserve to be highlighted.

I shall not dwell that much on the celebratory side, I would rather look at this Anniversary from the perspective of a very good opportunity to devise, drawing on the experience so far and lessons learned there from, the ways and objectives of BSEC for the years to come.

A few words however on the past 30 years:

BSEC is recognized as the oldest, most representative, institutionally mature full-fledged regional organization in the Black Sea region. The BSEC was conceived for expanding and enhancing economic cooperation among Member States in a highly strategic region, at the cross-roads of Europe and Asia. Actually the BSEC area is the BRIDGE that links the two.

Since its inception on 25 June 1992 in Istanbul, the Organization's main objective has been to reap the true economic potential of this area, to promote shared economic prosperity through an institutional platform for dialogue and cooperation in the Black

Sea region and beyond.

Following the euphoria and optimism generated for a better world order in the post-Cold War period, 11 Founding Members (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine, later to be joined by Serbia) established the BSEC as what I would characterize as a significant Confidence Building Measure (CBM) in a region of geostrategic importance.

The enlargement in 2020, with the Republic of North Macedonia becoming the 13th Member, I believe it is a testament to the relevance of and interest towards the Organization.

With the entry into force of its Charter on 1 May 1999, the BSEC acquired international legal identity and was transformed into a full-fledged regional economic intergovernmental organization, enjoying also Observer Status at the United Nations.

In March 1994 the Permanent International Secretariat, the PERMIS was established in Istanbul as the HQ of the Organization of the BSEC.

While the main focus of BSEC's endeavors is to strengthen collaboration for sustainable economic development, we also seek to contribute to a culture of cooperation, dialogue and good neighborly relations which can have strong dividends for regional security and stability.

The very fact that the BSEC has over the years succeeded to serve as an instrument of multilateral cooperation in a region with its

own challenges is in itself a major accomplishment underlining the important role of the Organization in the pursuit of the common objective of economic prosperity.

Of course, we do not live in a picture- perfect world and like many other regions of the globe; the Black Sea also has its own share of security challenges, political differences and sensitivities. I have to confess, however, that I could not imagine that we would witness again unfortunate developments as the one I referred to earlier on.

In the pursuit of promoting the economic interests of its Member States the agenda of the BSEC deals with a wide range of areas of cooperation, which include: Agriculture and Agro-industry, Banking and Finance, Combating Organized Crime, Culture, Customs Matters, Education, Emergency Assistance, Energy, Environmental Protection, Exchange of Statistical Data and Economic Information, Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals, Information and Communication Technologies, Institutional Renewal and Good Governance, Science and Technology, SMEs, Tourism, Trade and Economic Development, and Transport.

Since its establishment the BSEC has also evolved into a family that in addition to the inter-governmental branch includes the Related Bodies, namely, the Parliamentary Assembly (PABSEC), the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB), the BSEC Business Council (BSEC BC) and the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS).

Last but not least, the “enlarged” BSEC family includes Observers and SDPs. The fact that an increasing number of countries and international organizations have been seeking and respectively granted the status of Observer or SDP is by itself a significant achievement. We regard the mutually beneficial relationship with our Observers and SDP’s as an added value for the Organization. We also consider the interest towards the BSEC of countries and organizations from different areas as a genuine expression of the relevance and stature the Organization enjoys on the regional and international economic arena.

As to the structure of our Organization, it consists of:

1- the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, as the principal decision-making organ of BSEC;

2- the Committee of Senior Officials, which represents and acts on behalf of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and usually convenes four times a year;

3- the Subsidiary Organs, namely the Working Groups and Groups of Experts, which are established by the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs;

4- All activities carried out within the framework of BSEC are coordinated by the Chairmanship-in-Office which also ensures the proper conduct of BSEC proceedings as well as the implementation of the Resolutions and Decisions adopted by the Council. The Chairmanship-in-Office normally rotates among Member States every six months, in the English alphabetical order. The Republic

of Moldova is currently holding the rotating Chairmanship of the Organization (a power-point presentation on the Priorities of the Moldovan CiO will be shared with you later by the Executive Manager of BSEC PERMIS).

Now, turning to the way forward and as I have already mentioned, the 30th Anniversary offers an excellent opportunity to hold a mirror to the Organization and to further streamline and increase the efficiency of the activity of BSEC and its working methods.

I have many thoughts on the subject, but I would mention only some of them:

I see, for example a need and merit in adopting a longer-term approach when it comes to establishing priorities, objectives, programs and projects and the implementation framework thereof. That includes revising, perhaps, the duration of the mandate of successive CiOs and give the CiO Troika a more active role in this respect;

Another important point relates to the level of participation in the meetings of the CSO and the Subsidiary Organs. Raising the level of participation in the CSO I believe would have a strong return on increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the working methods;

A top priority is also revitalizing the BSEC Business Council, where we are already making progress to that end.

Finally, but very important as well is that there is room for further

substantiating the interaction and cooperation with the Observers and SDPs.

In this connection we have already initiated work to redraft our Economic Agenda that will guide our endeavors for the next decade as well as prepared a preliminary framework with the contribution of the Member States on how to further streamline and increase efficiency. There are also important draft documents that would further facilitate regional trade relations that we seek to adopt without further delay.

Hopefully with the urgently needed restoration of peace in the once tranquil waters of the Black Sea, we will be able to address all the issues that we have set our minds to during this very important year for our Organization.

Thank you for your kind attention.

**Statement by
Mr. Khusrav Noziri,
Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation
Organization (ECO)**

**H.E. Mr. Mahdi Safari, Honourable Deputy Foreign Minister of
Iran,**

**H.E. Mr. Lazar Comanescu, Secretary General of the Organization
of Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC),**

**H.E. Mr. Stefan Priesner, the United Nations Resident
Coordinator for the Islamic Republic of Iran,**

Excellencies,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a matter of great honour and privilege for me to attend and speak at this important conference. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere congratulations to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran for arranging this conference and providing an opportunity to the relevant stakeholders for offering their recommendations and roadmap for the future cooperation.

ECO represents a unique intergovernmental platform that

brings together countries from Central Asia, Caucuses, South and West Asia. Because of its diverse membership, location and the potential to contribute to the economic growth of the member countries, ECO is drawing renewed interest of the regional and global partners for jointly addressing the socio-economic development needed of the region

Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) aims to achieve the dual objectives of strengthening economic cooperation among its member countries and connecting them to global markets. To achieve these objectives, ECO has attributed as a suitable platform for mobilizing policy makers and other relevant stakeholders across the region and beyond to formulate the coherent, equitable and sustainable frameworks need to achieve the sustainable development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the face of COVID-19, the regional organizations and sub-regional groupings have a crucial role to play for bringing swift socio-economic recovery. In line with regional priorities and UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the 15th ECO Summit held in Ashgabat on 28 November, 2021 assessed the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economies of the region and provided a strategic direction and a way forward under the “Ashgabat Consensus for Action” for achieving the Member States’ common objectives and prosperity in the ECO region.

Excellencies,

There are various commonalties between the ECO and the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). Both are regional organizations focusing on socio-economic development of their respective regions. ECO and BSEC regions are immediate neighbors and two members of the ECO namely Azerbaijan and Turkey are also the members of the BSEC. The process of the establishment of the BSEC was initiated by Turkey which is also a one of the key founding members of the ECO and in fact the Treaty of Izmir which is the origin document for the establishment of ECO was signed at the city Izmir in Turkey.

The adoption of ECO Vision 2025 set out the long- and mid-term regional objectives and expected outcomes in six priority areas including Trade, Transport and Connectivity, Energy, Tourism, Economic Growth and Productivity and Social Welfare and Environment.

Excellencies,

As far as connectivity and cooperation in Transport within the ECO is concerned, here I would like to mention very briefly some of our projects in the field.

Railway between Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran (KTI Railway)

The project's first milestone was realized through the official launch of the test container train on 3 December 2014. The project's

goal is to connect the Republic of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran to the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and develop “a replicable model of the common corridor management mechanism in order to bring in greater efficiency in the ECO railway network”.

After extensive follow-up sessions, the Memorandum of Understanding between Railway Administrations (railways) of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran on the Implementation of KTI railway Freight Corridor was finalized and signed on the sidelines of the 15th ECO Summit on 26 November 2021 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan.

The en-route countries agreed that the future phases of the Study Project should be resulted in transforming the present KTI railway corridor into an economic corridor.

ECO Container Train on Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) route

The project on the ITI Container Train along Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul railway route was initiated by the 7th Meeting of Ministers of Transport in Antalya on 17-18 April 2008. The overall length of this railway route is 6,543 km (1,990 km in Pakistan, 2,603 km - Iran and 1,950 km - Turkey). The project’s goal is to provide railway connectivity for Pakistan and Iran to reach European railway junctures via Turkey. In this regard, Turkmenbashi Declaration (3 May 2018) urged to speed up the process of rehabilitation of the existing rail segments of the main ECO rail corridors and routes crossing through the Member States’ territories.

ECO Container Train on Istanbul-Almaty and Bandar Abbas-Almaty routes

The project titled “ECO Container Train on Istanbul-Almaty and Almaty-Bandar Abbas routes” was initiated in March 2001. The route’s overall length is 5,626 km (Turkey - 1,950 km, Iran - 2,016 km, Turkmenistan - 449 km, Uzbekistan - 732 km and Kazakhstan - 956 km). The project’s first milestone was realized via formal launch of the container train on 20 January 2002.

The project’s initial goal designed at its onset was to enable rail-based multimodal connectivity till sea outlets in Turkey and Iran for the en-route landlocked countries (LLCs), including Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

Apart from the cooperation in railways, ECO has initiated parallel road corridors. For instance, the ECO-Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul ITI Road corridor was successfully activated under TIR system on 8 October 2021 on the route between Pakistan (Karachi), Iran (Mirjaveh - Bazargan BCP) and Turkey (Gurbolag - Istanbul) with two Pakistani trucks fully loaded on return trip as well.

Excellencies,

Being the neighboring regions, there is a tremendous potential of cooperation between ECO and BSEC especially in transport sector. Both the regions can play complementary roles through extending transport corridors in connecting the whole Europe to Central Asia, West Asia, South Asia and China in the East.

Distinguished Participants,

Towards the end, I am confident that the spirit of cooperation which has inspired us to this moment would grow in the years to come and would further strengthen the regional cooperation in the field of transport and regional connectivity.

Finally, I would thank all the distinguished audience for the kind attention and wish fruitful deliberations during today's event on prospects for cooperation between Iran and BSEC.

**Inaugural Statement by
Dr. Mahdi Safari,
Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy**

**Honourable Secretary General of “Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization”,
Honourable Secretary General of ECO,
Distinguished UN Resident Coordinator,
Dear Ambassadors and members of Tehran Diplomatic Corps,
Distinguished Iranian officials and colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would like to welcome you all to “Tehran Event on Iran and 30-year-old BSEC: prospects for cooperation”. Allow me to congratulate the 30th anniversary of establishment of “Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization” (BSEC).

Distinguished Guests,

This conference is a clear demonstration of Iran’s firm commitment to promote multilateral economic diplomacy, particularly with neighbouring countries and regions. Black Sea region is a potential target by nature. This is more relevant when we approach it from transit and connectivity perspective. The more our regions are inter-connected, the more our nations will be better-off. Iran-BSEC partnerships and exchanges will contribute

to wider global connectivity as we link South and East Asia and Indian Ocean regions to Central Asia, Caucasus and Europe through Persian Gulf, Iran, Caspian and Black Sea. This is not an alternative but a complementary avenue of cooperation vis-a-vis other regional and global connectivity arrangements.

Having huge natural resources; transit and connectivity advantages; big market; large territory; and notable intra-regional trade; the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization will certainly be better-off if it develops concrete partnerships with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iran's outstanding location in Persian Gulf, Oman Sea, Indian Ocean and Caspian Sea, and in proximity to India, China, Central Asia and Caucasus, has made it an added-value to any sort of partnership with Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization.

Despite the illegal and cruel unilateral sanctions by the United States, which deprived us from realization of our full potential, Iran has enormous potential to offer for a meaningful partnership with interested potential partners, including Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization. This includes areas such as 1) multi-modal transport and transit; 2) trade in goods, including food and agricultural products; 3) Energy trade and transit; 4) tourism and culture; 5) emergency assistance and cooperation as we are prone to disasters; etc.

Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues,

As per the Event's programme, you will be discussing today the envisaged Iran-BSEC cooperation from two approaches: connectivity approach, and public-private sectors approach. These are among the most meaningful and effective approaches to collective endeavors for development and prosperity. As you see in this conference, there is huge interest on the part of your Iranian counterparts. I am grateful to officials and experts from line ministries, private sector, academia, civil society and other stakeholders in Iran who are present in this timely and important Event. I am sure that the meeting will benefit a lot from their inputs and contributions.

I would also like to express our gratitude to ambassadors and members of the international civil service who are present here. I am confident that their deliberations today will shed more light on the available and ways and means to promote cooperation and partnership between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and myself and my colleagues in the Economic Diplomacy Branch of the Ministry, are determined to explore all possibilities for enhancing cooperation with neighbouring countries and peripheral regions. This is the mandate given to Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the Administration of President Raeisi. Fortunately, this approach has been widely

welcomed by our partners in the region and beyond. This is why Tehran, these days, is one of the most viable centers for economic diplomacy and negotiations in the region.

Excellencies,

We are considering promotion of our institutional relations with the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation. This Conference will certainly lead us to right path. In any case, BSEC Secretariat and membership can rely on our full preparedness for cooperation whether in the capacity of sectoral dialogue partner or else. I stop here and look forward for more technical and detailed deliberations in the upcoming panels. I wish you a successful event today.

I thank you for your attention.

Annex 2:
Texts of Remarks
Presented by Panelists
at the Panels



Remarks by Panelist
Mr. Shahriar Afandizadeh,
Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development
of the Islamic Republic of Iran

**Distinguished participants,
ladies and gentlemen**

First of all, this is my honor to participate in the Tehran Event on Iran & the 30th year old of BSEC. Also I'd like to express my sincere gratitude to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic republic of Iran for organizing this important event and congratulate H.E. Mr. Lazar Comanescu on 30th anniversary of BSEC. I hope the outcomes of this important event will result to expand the transport and transit cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the countries of the region, especially the in the Black Sea region.

Dear participants,

It is quite clear that, by removing the restrictions on trade between the nations, the importance of increasing the trade flow speed is felt more than ever. This is an issue that needs to be addressed through the management of transit corridors.

Today, many transport infrastructures have connected the countries in the region, but we can all cite instances of infrastructures which, despite years of construction, they are not still efficient. From this sign, it can be concluded that rather than the lack of infrastructures, it

is non-physical barriers and problems related to trade and transport processes, which lead to non-effective trade process.

In the other hand, it is clear that the existence of trade between countries requires the ease of dialogue between our nations and civilizations, and only if mutual recognition between cultures and civilizations happen, we can hope for the prosperity of trade in the region and beyond.

Here let's review the definition of developing corridors:

A developing corridor is a network of integrated processes and infrastructures within a geographic area, designed to stimulate social and economic development. The lowest level of development in the corridor is the transport routes that connect the territories. If the barriers of trade and transport removed, and integration of processes take place, the economic development will emerge across the corridor from beginning to the end.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We need to change our attitudes about transit to a more transcendent concept, and beyond acting as an intermediary country for the passage of cargo, to address new ways of creating economic and trade cohesion and value chain formation in the region.

I would like to remind you that each of the countries in the region has a unique talent and ability in the fields of natural resources, human resources and technologies.

However, to create synergies between the countries in the region,

we can move towards the joint productions and joint logistic hubs in the chain of advanced logistics centers which are created across development corridors. In this way, a country's resources, combined with the technology of another country. By creating added values, it becomes the final product which could be exported to global markets using multimodal transport. In this joint effort, we will be able to create a development corridor and value chain in the region and tie those value chains and development corridors to the surrounding areas of civilization. Achieving this goal will be possible, especially in logistics centers located at border crossing points and free zones. In Iran, a chain of logistics centers has been located and the studies and executive operations are ongoing.

So far, in order to optimize the processes of cargo and passenger traffic across the border crossing terminals, an integrated border management system is designed in Iran and will soon be implemented at all border terminals. By implementation of this system, the controls will be smartened and unnecessary stops will be minimized, and it will be possible to establish common border gates with neighbors by establishing customs alliances.

Dear delegations,

Iran multimodal Transit Network is an integrated and cohesive network of transit corridors and routes which connect the Iranian civilization to the surrounding areas from north to south and east to west.

Our joint action together with BSEC, to design a multimodal

transit network in the region, and removing the non-physical barriers, will be result to creation of an integrated and coherent development corridor in the region.

Increasing the interaction of transport and logistics structures, implementing electronic mechanisms for document exchange and toll collection, development of goods tracking systems, removal of restrictions and reduction of transport and transit dues and joint efforts to create electronic corridors in the region, are the steps to Guarantee the success of our developing corridor.

Therefore, I suggest to jointly plan the realization of a development corridor in our geographical area by initiating the multimodal transit network between Iran and black sea region, so that the stated goals can be achieved one after another in an interactive atmosphere.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I believe that the coordinated programs and actions of the Islamic Republic of Iran and BSEC in the field of multimodal transport and transit will have brilliant effects on the prosperity of the economy and trade of the region. I hope by the outcomes of today's meeting, we will be able to make a significant development in all fields of trade and transport. Finally, once again, I'd like to appreciate Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic republic of Iran and BSEC Secretariat for organizing of this event.

Thank you very much

**Remarks by Panelist
Ambassador Nikolina Kuneva,
Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria in Iran**

**Esteemed Secretary General,
Esteemed Deputy Minister Safari,
Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

First of all I would like to thank our hosts for organizing this event and for inviting us to be part of it. I am sure than the visit of BSEC Secretary General Ambassador Comanescu will be productive and will positively contribute to the development of the relations between BSEC and the Islamic Republic of Iran as a Sectoral Dialogue partner.

The Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation has established itself as the most representative, comprehensive and institutionally developed organization in the wider Black Sea region. After 30 years of existence, the BSEC has become an effective model in the region for multilateral economic cooperation, which provides a forum for dialogue and exchange of ideas.

Bulgaria's participation in the BSEC is an important element of our regional policy, aimed at strengthening confidence, stability and security in the wider Black Sea region, which is a prerequisite for achieving economic growth, competitiveness and prosperity.

Bulgaria is a co-founder of the organization and has always

sought to promote the BSEC as a project-oriented organization. Over the years, with the valuable assistance of the BSEC Secretariat, Bulgaria held five successful Chairmanships of the Organization and has been an active coordinator of various BSEC Working Groups. Bulgaria's last Chairmanship of the BSEC (1 January – 30 June 2019), under the motto "Sea of Opportunities", focused on advancing regional cooperation in the areas of transport, culture and environmental protection.

We believe that efforts to expand and deepen the BSEC's relations with international partners should continue even though regrettably nowadays we are facing serious challenges in our region as a result of the unprovoked war in Ukraine, that affects also the work of BSEC. But the BSEC Member States benefit from sharing valuable experience with Observers and Sectoral Dialogue Partners, including Iran as such. Participation in the activity of the Working Groups is an opportunity to present our views on the sectoral policies and contribute to promoting the deepening of contacts among the countries. So, within the working groups more active interaction between the BSEC and Iran could take place as presenting the potential and the capacity of our partners is of importance.

Our region has a strategic location and vast economic potential. The development of the regional transport infrastructure is among the BSEC priorities. To reach an optimal level of integration of transport networks, attention must be paid to international

transport projects within the Trans-European Network and the Euro-Asian corridors.

In order to achieve sustainable mobility and high efficiency, our activities should be aimed at overcoming key challenges related to infrastructure modernization, implementation of intelligent transport systems, improving the competitiveness of transport companies and reducing the impact on the environment.

It is important to implement projects in accordance with the main BSEC memoranda of understanding and our efforts should be focused on continuing cooperation in the field of road safety, developing intermodal transportation, strengthening transport institutional capacity and facilitating international trade and transport facilitation through digitalization.

Bulgaria has set in its transport policy a number of measures to improve transport connectivity with the neighboring countries and regions, including Iran. With joint efforts we may contribute to the further development of the transport in BSEC and the establishment of effective trade routes.

I believe that the partnership between Iran and the BSEC could create opportunities for initiatives of mutual interest, especially in the field of transit, culture, tourism, environment protection, people-to-people contacts. The geographical location of Iran and the active actions of its administration in introducing variety of new transport corridors shows the potential in this respect.

Thank you for your attention.

**Remarks by Panelist
Ambassador Mirela-Carmen Grecu,
Embassy of Romania in Iran**

**Your Excellency, Deputy Minister Mahdi Safari,
Your Excellency, Secretary General, Ambassador Lazăr
Comănescu,
Distinguished colleagues/participants,**

I am delighted to be part of today's conference and I welcome this framework of dialogue, all the more relevant in the current context - marked by dreadful developments fundamentally affecting the vision of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization's commitment to fostering peace, economic liberty and equal security and stability, as our Charter provides for.

Romania's involvement with intergovernmental economic cooperation at the Black Sea goes back to June 1992, when the Organization was established, as 11 heads of state and governments signed the "*Summit Declaration on Black Sea Economic Cooperation*" and the "*Bosphorus Statement*". 4 years later, in 1998, in Yalta, the "*BSEC Charter*" which I mentioned earlier was signed and thus it became the fundamental document of our Organization. Since then, Romania has continued to actively contribute, including by voluntary financial contributions, to the institutional development of BSEC, to its extension of multifold economic cooperation and to

its policy of partnerships.

However, the current atmosphere in our Organization is far from “business as usual” given the disturbing situation taking place in one of our member states / Ukraine.

As such, Romania has condemned in the strongest possible terms the unjustified and unprovoked Russian aggression on Ukraine. We consider this to be a blatant violation of international law and of the international agreements to which Russia is a party, including the UN Charter. At the same time, it represents the gravest security and humanitarian crisis in decades, with extremely serious consequences at the sub-regional (Eastern Europe), regional (Europe) and global level.

Your Excellencies,

The Black Sea region remains a topic of priority in Romania’s foreign policy. As a founding BSEC Member State, Romania is thoroughly engaged in developing cooperation in this region of crucial strategic importance. Our activities aim at strengthening of democratic stability and prosperity through enhancing cohesion via connecting regional projects as well as by promoting an inclusive approach towards dialogue and cooperation among BSEC Member States. An important part of this engagement is connected to constantly supporting and encouraging a solid interaction with relevant international partners, foremost European Union, as the greatest donor and main economic partner of BSEC economies.

As a clear expression of Romania's engagement with BSEC and in the added value it brings, Romania held the semestrial Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC six times. I would single out the last Chairmanship, which took place for the entire year of 2020, under unprecedented and extraordinary circumstances and with the motto "Bridging Shores - Enhancing Cohesion" - which is also the acronym for Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

A few words on this important development: the Romanian Chairmanship-in-Office, through the endeavours of the Chairman-in-Office, Minister of foreign affairs Bogdan Aurescu, in close cooperation with the Secretariat of the Organization and with the Member States, has made sustained efforts to unblock the situation and to identify a consensual formula for ensuring the continuity of BSEC Chairmanships-in-Office. The identified solution consisted of Romania's decision to assume, based on its constructive commitment to cooperation in the Black Sea and as an expression of its responsibility at a regional level, the exceptional extension of the national mandate of the Chairmanship-in-Office for the second semester of 2020 as well, given that the succession of the next Chairmanships has been agreed (n.n. Albania, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova). The solution was welcomed by all BSEC Member States and was adopted by ministerial consensus.

This decision of Romania to extend its mandate occurred under exceptional conditions and reconfirms Romania's continued commitment to strengthening regional cooperation in the Black

Sea, as a way of boosting economic cooperation and promoting stability and prosperity in a region of strategic interest to us.

This mandate extension has not affected the priorities set by the Romanian Chairmanship at its onset, rather we have sought to channel common efforts towards steering the Organization in the context of the COVID-19 global pandemic. This is important given the need for continuity within BSEC activities. Under the motto “*Bridging Shores Enhancing Cohesion*”, Romanian Chairmanship strived to forge a more result-oriented cooperation by building confidence and trust, encouraging dialogue and constructive action with the aim to take further steps to deliver on the core mission of BSEC – shared prosperity through promoting better connectivity within the region.

Through an inclusive and constructive sectoral approach, we promoted inter-connectivity within our region, with special focus on the field of Transport – our main sectoral priority. Nevertheless, there we also engaged in the *soft connectivity issues*, such as the environment, climate change, Sustainable Development Goals, competitiveness – to which we have devoted a special place as equally relevant sectoral priorities of our mandate.

Distinguished participants,

A key priority of Romania’s engagement in BSEC is encouraging the BSEC-EU interaction. Taking into consideration the increased EU political and financial engagement in the regional cooperation in

the Black Sea, with a direct and positive impact on both economies and societies, Romania supported developing a flexible, result-oriented and closer BSEC-EU cooperation. EU-backed cooperation remains a good source of inspiration for regional cooperation as it supported BSEC comparative advantages and readies BSEC for more dynamism, matching commitments with resources. The Common Maritime Agenda and the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for the Black Sea, as adopted during the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU, are two concrete examples.

Strengthening the international profile of BSEC is one of the keys to unlocking the regional economic potential - that cannot be done without strengthening an important core pillar of BSEC - its partnership policy. Romania grants the utmost importance to BSEC Observers and Sectoral Dialogue Partners.

Here, I would like to mention Islamic Republic of Iran especially, as a long time valued Sectorial Dialogue Partner of BSEC, one that Romania appreciates.

**Dear participants,
Excellencies,**

It is a sobering fact that in the light of unfolding crisis in Ukraine, which has inevitable consequences for BSEC operations, we face a legitimate question about the future of cooperation in the Black Sea region. Of course, it is up to the BSEC community to identify what avenues may lay in the future. Yet, what is clear to us is that

a *business as usual* approach under the current circumstances is simply not an option.

As I conclude my remarks, allow me to highlight that BSEC cooperation is possible only if the actions of its Member States are based on shared values – embodied in our BSEC Charter – and on the common belief in working together to build a stronger, more peaceful and more prosperous region.

Thank you for your attention.

**Remarks by Panelist
Ambassador Dragan Todorović,
Embassy of the Republic of Serbia in Iran**

**Your Excellency Secretary General,
Your Excellency Deputy Minister,
Dear Participants**

Allow me to express gratitude on behalf of my Ministry and myself for the invitation to this conference. With numerous international challenges facing us every day, we encourage every effort to bring countries together, especially regarding economic cooperation and wellbeing of our people.

As you all already know, the wider Black Sea region has a huge economic potential. That was the idea when the Black Sea Economic Cooperation was launched thirty years ago, with countries of the Region entering new and exciting form of cooperation. With millions of people, rich resource base and unprecedented natural beauty, the Black Sea region offered numerous possibilities for cooperation in many areas such are tourism, trade, energy, culture and transport to name some. Now, thirty years later, it is questionable whether or not we activated the full potential of this Cooperation. Maybe now, more than ever, we could use every opportunity to enhance our relations and find common ground. Serbia always believed that, that is one of the main advantages

of regional cooperation initiatives such is BSEC, to create a forum in which countries could resolve their differences trough areas of common interest.

Its unique position at the crossroads of Europe and Asia makes the Black Sea region and its countries instrumental in connecting regional markets as a transportation and information hub. It has been our position from the beginning that we should enhance the role of the private sector and entrepreneurship, while governments and international organizations would provide adequate conditions for them to do so. This is a goal of the Black Sea Cooperation yet to be achieved.

That is why Serbia, together with our Iranian colleagues as BSEC Sectorial Dialogue Partners, actively participates in this initiative.

For us, key areas of cooperation are transportation, trade and tourism, while energy remains number one issue of ever-rising importance, especially in current circumstances. We believe that the greatest challenge in the forthcoming period is achieving and maintaining economic stability. We see an uncontrolled rise of inflation in almost all countries, as a result of massive economic stimulus started after World economic crisis in 2009 and then boosted during COVID-19 pandemic. We see problems in the supply chains. And on the top of that, we now face energy and food crisis as a result of conflict in Ukraine. We firmly believe that the only way to mitigate this is trough international cooperation and mutual understanding and tolerance.

Republic of Serbia remains open and reliable partner for this cooperation, as I'm sure our Iranian friends are as well.

Because of the fact that this is a Panel referred to non-state entities and private sector's Contribution, I want to stress that Republic of Serbia is investing great effort in strengthening small and medium enterprises, as a foundation of a healthy economy. In that regard, the/our Government adopted additional stimulus package for Small and mid-size enterprises (SME) during COVID-19 pandemic. Naturally, we are eager to explore new possibilities that international initiatives, such is Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), have to offer.

Unfortunately, we haven't used the capabilities of the BSEC Working Group on SMEs to the full extent. One of the challenges in economic cooperation with our wider Black Sea region and trough that with our Asian partners, apart from great distance transportation, lies in trade and non-trade barriers, procedures and regulations. That is why free trade agreements and memoranda on trade and investment facilitation are a good start for overcoming such barriers. That is one of many areas BSEC member countries have been working on for the last 20 years, unfortunately with not much success. It is evident that countries deal with this issue the bilateral, rather than the multilateral level.

We believe that the maintenance of economic stability is the top priority at the moment. It is clear that the measures imposed by countries aiming to prevent first the spread of COVID-19 and now

economic problems as a result of the war in Ukraine, have inevitably had negative effects, primarily on the economy across the globe. Furthermore, it is now clear that even the measures introduced to stabilize the economy, however necessary they were, also had some negative effects, as evidenced by the explosion of inflation in the world. In that sense, I would like to emphasize that Serbia strives to keep these effects under control through constant fiscal and monetary measures, aiming to maintain a favorable trade and investment climate in the country and thus contribute to economic stability, not only in Serbia but also in the wider region.

Our resolve and seriousness of the approach we have applied is evidenced by the macroeconomic parameters of the country, which I must admit I will be most pleased to briefly present to you. In this context, I would like to emphasize that Serbia, owing to the efficient and timely response of the Government, recorded a GDP decline of only 0.9% in 2020. COVID-19 and global slowdown, according to available data, had a less severe impact on Serbia compared to most other countries, due to achieved macroeconomic and financial stability, growth momentum, fiscal space created in previous years, large and timely monetary and fiscal package, and structure of the economy.

GDP recovery to pre-crisis level was accomplished already in the first quarter (Q1) 2021, while according to the Statistic Office of the Republic of Serbia data real GDP growth in 2021 stood at 7.4%. Such developments are the result of growing activity in industry,

construction and the service sectors.

Due to negative effects of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and the uncertainty regarding duration of the conflict, we have revised our projection of GDP growth for 2022 downward by 0.5 percentage points (pp) (from a range of 4-5, to a range of 3.5-4.5%). According to Statistic Office of the Republic of Serbia flash estimate, GDP growth in Q1 was at a level of 4.3% which is in line with our projection.

I am of the opinion that the Black Sea Economic Cooperation has the capacity and can be a constructive and proactive partner in all areas I have mentioned, in order to enable the countries of this region to work together, rather than individually. Of course, in order to achieve that, we must first ensure the position of BSEC as a modern, functional and project-oriented organization, to which Serbia is ready to contribute as much as possible.

I would like to reiterate that in achieving these goals you can count on Serbia as a reliable partner that highly values regional approach as evidenced by, among others, our engagement within the “Open Balkan” initiative, where we work with our regional partners to improve cooperation and living standard of all our citizens.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Thank you.

**Remarks by Panelist Mr. Fatih Şener,
Vice-President of Union of Road Transport Association in
the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Region (BSEC-URTA)**

**Excellencies,
Distinguish Guests,
Dear Colleagues,**

It is a great pleasure for me to greet you today, here in Tehran, on the occasion of celebrating the 30th BSEC Anniversary and this meeting, which is a very well organized and focused on increasing cooperation between Iran and BSEC.

Today in my capacity as the Vice President of BSEC-URTA, I would like to share some activities of BSEC-URTA and importance of facilitation and technologies of international road transport in the BSEC Region and Iran.

For the ones, who do not know BSEC-URTA:

BSEC-URTA was founded by Associations of International Road Transporters in eleven BSEC member countries in Antalya (Turkey) on 24 October 2001. Since its foundation, BSEC-URTA aims to provide private sector contribution to the multilateral cooperation process underway on the level of Governments in the Black Sea since 1992.

Within this framework the Union gives special emphasize on building channels of dialogue and cooperation with every related body globally. BSEC-URTA plays a major role to coordinate efforts by and influence of its Member Associations towards promoting and guarding their commonsectoral interests in the BSEC region and on the international level.

We are so happy and content to express that ICCIMA from Iran, became an observer of BSEC-URTA, brought a new perspective by the Iran's strategic location, a country, a transit gateway to the Central Asia, to theGulf Countries, with also its ports both has sea option to Central Asia and Gulf Countries as well.

Unfortunately like most of BSEC countries, in Iran, we have to work together on many directions improving the transportation infrastructure, transportation services. We have attracted transportation flows in the current global logistic chains to the BSEC region and Iran.

We have to demonstrate that this itinerary, BSEC region connecting and strengthening with Iran transit corridors might be used with its facilitated, cost effective measures and modern customs applications can be an itinerary that backbones the global trade.

What about now?

After two years of COVID-19 Pandemic which brought us much sorrow and pain we are facing today due to the war situation in

the region unforeseen challenges which I can say changed our way of thinking and we have to admit changed our life.

So to adapt these changes and overcome the obstacles, we have to work together, create strong logistic chains in the BSEC region and connect it with Iran's value added logistic transit possibilities. 2 years of closure of Turkmenistan, The regional crises, the queues in the borders, clearly showed us that, we, as countries, must create new transit corridors, A-B-C-D plans in international road transport.

Distinguish Guest,

I would like to mention two projects of BSEC-URTA. As BSEC-URTA, a road permit was created by cooperation with BSEC and BSEC-URTA, now, with the participation of currently 8 BSEC member states, the journey of these permits reached to 3.000, we are working to further and expand BSEC permit to Eurasia.

Most importantly, BSEC-URTA is one of the first organizations who is started to convert paper based permit into the digital format. We, as BSEC-URTA, in all platforms express the request of road transport sector, we need more digitalization starting by the road permits.

BSEC-URTA has Working Party on Border Crossing Problems in BSEC Region, realizing studies and surveys to monitor and try to find ways to avoid the queues in the BSEC borders. BSEC-URTA follows and contributes to every Intermodal, eTIR, eCMR Pilot

projects by circulations and discussions with its members.

BSEC-URTA gives a specific importance to promote digitization projects, in this regard, created a working group on digitalization, which we saw the active contribution of ICCIMA from Iran and sincerely thank to them.

After focusing on electronic road permits, BSEC-URTA is calling for applying on driver electronic visa tools for professional drivers. With the hope that the very next future will bring us a change in better, with improvement of our economic and social conditions in our countries and beyond allow me to declare my sincere gratitude for this meeting and Iran's contribution to BSEC and BSEC-URTA.

Remaining all united, we are a force which has the strength to beat the threats, meet challenges and turn them into opportunities.

Thank you.

**Remarks by Panelist Mrs. Leila Ajdari,
Director General for Marketing and Development
of Foreign Tourism, Ministry of Cultural Heritage,
Tourism and Handicrafts of Iran**

Distinguished Attendance

Ladies and Gentlemen

Nowadays great many countries round the world are quite dependent on tourism Economy. After All, tourism is the one of the best-positioned sectors of potent to drive inclusive growth, create jobs, reduce poverty and foster sustainable development and peace.

Iran enjoys strategic geographical location bridging the Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean and Caspian Sea countries through neighboring countries like Turkey and Russia to Black Sea member states particularly by means of railroad for transiting goods. This potential can be utilized in tourism to provide for easy access with reasonable price.

Islamic Republic of Iran also has prioritized tourism and cultural development in its future plans and reconsiders its tourism ties to the world countries.

Black sea region countries also are among Iran tourism target markets. Attending this BSEC session is a golden opportunity for boosting multilateral relations particularly in order to pave the

way for boosting bilateral private stakeholders' cooperation and coordination. To have an analytic view I try to provide with a road map of tourism ties to the region member states:

■ **Russia:**

Iran enjoys four seasonal nature, seven thousand years of historic and cultural background as well as its magnificent handicraft all are appealing to Russian tourists. Great ties have been existed among the people of two countries throughout the history particularly as Russian Muslims show a specific interest into visiting Iran.

Our findings reveal that great many of young Russian People have a kind of interest to Farsi literature and therefore take a trip to Fars province because of our great poets. In the meantime our Iran southern islands in Persian Gulf due to their humid and hot weather

Bear in mind that 70% of Russian tourists pay a visit to Iran for Business reasons so metropolitans like Tehran Mashhad and Isfahan are their main targets.

Current Status:

There is a bilateral agreement between two countries on boosting tourism ties and based on that

Bilateral group visa waiver agreement is supposed to be put into effect in near future

A number of FAM tours including Russian tour operators, news

reporters and filming groups have been held

Bilateral attendance in International Tourism exhibitions

Suggestions:

Holding some B2B sessions to make a type of coordination among private stakeholders in order to tackle the current problems and facilitate the process.

Activating provincial connections among Iranian provinces are favorite to Russian tourists and Russian tourism activists at the state level.

Offering some routes for tourism exchange to be able to provide the tourists with their favorites.

■ Turkey:

Iran and Turkey have very close trade and economic relations. Both countries are part of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). Bilateral trade between the nations has been always of concern bilaterally. Iran is the second-largest supplier of natural gas to Turkey, behind Russia. Iran is also an important source of crude oil. Also annually a considerable number of my compatriots pay a visit to Turkey on holiday purposes.

Current status:

Two countries have an executive plan to cooperate in Tourism and Bilateral Technical Committee Sessions are hold regularly in order to facilitate this cooperation

A number of FAM tours are held for Turkish Reporters and also Heath tourism activists as well as Media

Travel agents of both countries actively take part in international Tourism exhibitions

Both countries tourism authorities have been in contact throughout last twenty years and there is an agreement between Iran Travel agent associations and TOURSAB

B2B meeting is held among tourism of two countries in order to tackle the existing problems

Suggestions:

More active media contact in order to introduce two countries cultural and natural potentials

-Supporting active advertising agents in two countries to improve tourism potential awareness cross the borders and more

Activating Iranian receptive travel agent in order to play a more active role in Turkish market.

■ Bulgaria:

Two countries have been interested in boosting bilateral relations particularly in terms of energy as Bulgaria can be a potential gateway for Iran natural gas transfer to Europe.

Current status:

At the moment there is a memorandum of Understanding among two countries and also a tourism executive program also have been signed in July 2021

Suggestions:

Definitely the main drawbacks is lack of enough advertising and promotion of Iranian tourism potentials in Bulgaria tackling this a kind of agent must be assigned to represent Iran and data collection on Bulgarian outgoing tourist real needs and lead bilateral relation development in a step wise manner.

Some serious measures must be taken in order to facilitate bilateral visa issuing.

■ Romania:

Although two countries have some economic ties that shown to be on the rise in last few years but it seems that tourism connections must receive more attention bilaterally as the main issue is that two countries market is quite unknown to tourism activists and they need some incentive to explore the existing potentials.

Holding cultural and handicrafts Festivals attended by all member states as well as determination of tourism capitals for the area can be of influence.

And a specific tourism work group can be formed and in the meantime some types of products can be worked upon in order to make closer bounds between Iran and BSEC countries including marine tourism, literary tourism as well as agri-tourism.

This workgroup can function as training focal point to improve practical skills in tourism related jobs.

Annex 3:
Press Release
and Report by
BSEC Secretariat





Upon the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran (MFA), the BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Lazar Comanescu, visited Teheran to participate as key note speaker in the Conference “Iran & 30-year-old BSEC: Prospects for Cooperation” organized on 30 May 2022 by the MFA in dedication to the 30th BSEC Anniversary.

On this occasion, Ambassador Comanescu was received by H.E. Dr. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Minister of Foreign Affairs. The PERMIS Secretary General expressed his highest appreciation and thanks to the Iranian side for organizing such an event and for being invited there to as speaker. Foreign Minister Abdollahian congratulated the Secretary General on 30th BSEC Anniversary. The mutual interest was expressed in enhancing the already active cooperation developed between BSEC and Iran, since 2009 when the latter became a Sectoral Dialogue Partner of BSEC. Possible actions aimed at this objective were discussed as well.



Further exchanges of views there upon took place in working meetings with Mr. Mahdi Safari, Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy and Mr. Seyed Jalaedin Alavi Sabzevari, Director General for Multilateral and International Economic Cooperation at the MFA.



While in Teheran, Ambassador Comanescu also met the Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Ambassador Khusrav Noziri, with the two interlocutors agreeing to an increased interaction between their organizations.”



ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION
Permanent International Secretariat - The Secretary General

BS/C.2022.0062

Istanbul, 10 June 2022

Your Excellency, Dear Minister,

I would like to express my most sincere and heartfelt thanks for the kind invitation to participate as keynote speaker in the Conference *“Iran & 30-year-old BSEC: Prospects for Cooperation”*, organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran on 30 May 2022. It was indeed a very successful event and I am grateful for the most valuable contribution Your country has brought there through to the commemoration of the 30th Anniversary of BSEC.

I would at the same time like to share with You how pleased and honored I was to meet with You and to fruitfully exchange views about the possible ways and modalities to further enhance the cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and BSEC. I am confident that through joint efforts we will fulfill this important objective.

Finally allow me to convey my thanks and high appreciation to all of Your collaborators who contributed to the organization of such a successful Conference as well as of the whole and wonderful program of my stay in Tehran and Isfahan. Particular thanks are directed to Deputy Minister Mahdi SAFARI, Director General, Seyed Jaleddin Alavi Sabzavari, and Counsellor Seyed Rouhollah Kamel.

Thanking You again, I avail myself to convey to Your Excellency the assurances of my highest consideration.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lazăr Comănescu', written over a white background.

Ambassador Lazăr COMĂNESCU
Secretary General

To: H.E. Dr. Hossein AMIR-ABDOLLAHIAN
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the
Islamic Republic of Iran
TEHRAN



ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION
Permanent International Secretariat

BS/INFO.2022.0188

The Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS) of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) presents its compliments to the BSEC Observers and Sectoral Dialogue Partners and has the honour to inform the Latter on the following:

On 29-31 May 2022 the Secretary General of BSEC PERMIS, Ambassador Lazăr COMĂNESCU, visited Tehran, upon the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of the Islamic Republic of Iran to participate as keynote speaker in the **Conference “Iran & 30-year-old BSEC: Prospects for Cooperation”**, organized by the MFA on 30 May 2022, in dedication to BSEC’s 30th Anniversary. He was accompanied by Mr. Alexei NISTREAN, Executive Manager in charge of relations with BSEC Observers and Sectoral Dialogue Partners (SDP).

Ambassador COMĂNESCU was received, on 29 May, by H.E. Dr. Hossein AMIR-ABDOLLAHIAN, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and had working meetings with Mr. Mahdi SAFARI, Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy and with Mr. Seyed Jalaedin ALAVI SABZAVARI, Director General for Multilateral and International Economic Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran. He also met, on 30 May, with the Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Ambassador Khusrav NAZIRI.

In the meeting with Foreign Minister AMIR-ABDOLLAHIAN as well as in those with the other representatives of the MFA, the Iranian side highlighted the following aspects:

- Iran is paying particular attention to the cooperation with BSEC and is interested in further enhancing this cooperation;
- Iran can be a transit focal point for linking Asia (particularly China) and Caucasus with Europe;
- Cooperation in the field of transport is a priority for Iran, but other areas

like energy, tourism and emergency assistance are important as well;

- Developing a transport corridor linking Persian Gulf and BSEC region is also a priority;
- While seeking to actively participate in the activities of BSEC as a BSEC Sectoral Dialog Partner, Iran would wish to elevate its status in relation to BSEC to that of BSEC Observer and is considering even the possibility to get full BSEC membership.

In his turn the Secretary General:

- Congratulated Iran for the initiative of organizing a Conference in Teheran dedicated to the 30th Anniversary of BSEC and thanked for being invited there to as speaker;
- Expressed his appreciation for Iran's active interaction with BSEC as a Sectoral Dialogue Partner of the Organization and welcomed the willingness of Iran to enhance the cooperation with BSEC, including and particularly in areas like transport;
- Recommended that Iranian experts participating in the respective meeting of the BSEC WGs advance proposals of concrete ways of interaction with BSEC according to existing Framework of Cooperation between BSEC and Iran;
- As to Iran's interest in getting the Observer status and, eventually, full membership, Ambassador Comanescu, while appreciating Tehran's wish to enhance the cooperation with BSEC, reminded the relevant provisions in the statutory documents of BSEC, respectively that the decisions there for belongs to the Member States, and, therefore, advised his interlocutors to hold prior bilateral consultations with the latter.

As to the Conference ***"Iran & 30-year-old BSEC: Prospects for Cooperation"***, more than 100 people attended there to, including Ambassadors, Deputy Head Missions and other diplomats from the embassies of the BSEC Member States as well as of EU Member States and other European countries, accredited to Iran, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and line ministries of Iran, representative of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, private sector and local mass-media.

Opening statements were made by Mr. Stefan PRIESNER, United Nations Resident Coordinator in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ambassador Mr. Lazăr COMĂNESCU, Secretary General of the BSEC PERMIS and Mr. Mahdi SAFARI, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy.

In his statement, the Secretary General highlighted the mutually beneficial relationship with Observers and SDPs and the added value it brings to the Organization.

The conference continued with two Panels in the presence of both BSEC PERMIS Secretary General and the Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy.

In Panel 1: ***Iran and BSEC Region: Prospects for Wider Connectivity*** the Black Sea region' s importance as a major route for global transport and energy supply was highlighted. Existing and new initiatives and frameworks for harnessing maximum mutual benefits from wider connectivity between Iran and Black Sea region were also discussed.

In Panel 2: ***Iran-BSEC Agenda: Non-state entities and private sector's Contribution*** the participants acknowledged the important role of private sector for realization of BSEC objectives and in the enhancement of the cooperation and interaction of private entities form BSEC and Iran.

The Secretary General was interviewed by the local mass-media. The event was live streamed on the internet with a link placed on the BSEC website and was broadcasted on local TV stations.

In the meeting with the ECO Secretary General, the two interlocutors agreed to an increased interaction between their organizations. In particular it was agreed to work together to exchange experience and expertise, to attend each other's meetings to organize joint events in the areas of common interest. The conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding between the secretariats of two organizations was also considered.

On 31 May the hosts organized a visit to the UNESCO world heritage sites in the historic city of Isfahan.

The Permanent International Secretariat of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the BSEC Observes and Sectoral Dialogue Partners the assurances of its highest consideration.



Istanbul, 6 June 2022



Annex 4:
Photo Gallery























