

## **RECOMMENDATION 103/2008\***

### **ON**

#### **Social Cohesion within the BSEC Member States: Contribution to Political Stability**

1. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation is fully aware that fostering social cohesion is a necessary precondition for democratic security and sustainable development and that divided and unequal societies cannot achieve political stability in the long term.
2. Given the broad scope of the concept and its crucial role in fostering solidarity, social responsibility and interdependence, much of the prospect of creating social peace, stability and prosperity in the BSEC region will depend on the success of efforts to establish stronger cohesion within the BSEC Member States.
3. The Assembly takes note of the fact that the past five years have accelerated development and brought the BSEC region closer to the goal of economic stability. It also welcomes the effort of the BSEC Member States to parallel the economic development with social sustainability, by increasingly giving priority to social policies, particularly with regard to improving social security and fighting poverty and unemployment.
4. In this respect, the Assembly recalls its relevant recommendations on Social guarantees during the transition period (14/1996); Rights and social protection of refugees and displaced persons (21/1997); The legal framework of the protection of migrant workers in the Black Sea countries and the relations between immigrant communities and the host country (51/2001); Women's participation in the political, economic, social and cultural life (61/2002); Social

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\* The Assembly debate on 11 June 2008 (see Doc. GA31/CC30/REP/08 – Report on “Social cohesion within the BSEC Member States: contribution to political stability”, discussed by the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee at its Thirtieth Meeting in Sofia on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2008; Rapporteur: Mr. Styopa SAFARYAN – Armenia)

reintegration of jobless people (67/2002); The fight against poverty (74/2003); Improving social, economic and civil rights of people with disabilities (77/2004); Improvement of the quality of life in the BSEC Member States (100/2007); and calls upon the Member States to speed up their implementation.

5. The Assembly is deeply concerned with the persisting problem of disparities and inequality and notes that the political determination of governments to bring in social development can yield results. Improving the quality of state institutions and thus ensuring more efficient delivery of social services is of vital importance for the policies' success and the raise of public trust.

6. At the same time, the Assembly acknowledges that social cohesion, by referring to social trends, underlying values and principles of our societies and the relationships between the various societal actors and systems, goes beyond a tactical level of service provision targeted at isolated indicators. Therefore, the Assembly stresses the necessity of a broader approach and concerted actions, ensuring the maximum participation of the parties involved at local, national and regional level.

7. The Assembly believes that cooperation among the BSEC Member States through the development and exchange of information, experience and good practice is necessary in order to identify national and international trends and further develop the concept of social cohesion in the BSEC context. Synergy of different approaches, levels of knowledge, traditions, political frameworks and expertise would give added value to this process.

**8. Therefore, the Parliamentary Assembly recommends** the Parliaments and Governments of the BSEC Member States:

- i. **to strengthen** the role of the ministries with responsibilities to promote social cohesion (employment, health, housing, social protection, education) by improving their processes of policy development and priority setting;
- ii. **to intensify** the fight against poverty and social exclusion through alleviating measures for those in need and preventive policies for people at risk;
- iii. **to amplify** social protection efficiency by paying particular attention to vulnerable groups, minorities, people with disabilities and ethnic groupings who are usually at higher risk of exclusion;
- iv. **to improve** national legislations with a view to providing real support to the self-organization of employable population, including the setting up of small businesses;
- v. **to take up steps** aiming at the social adaptation of migrants including centres to study languages and the legislation of the host country, as well as professional training courses taking into account labour market requirements;
- vi. **to maintain** the decrease of unemployment and boosting job creation as high-priority issues towards social and economic integration;

- vii. **to place emphasis** on women and youth empowerment and access to the labour market;
- viii. **to promote** training programmes for unemployed of all ages and particularly vulnerable groups;
- ix. **to redress** any form of stigmatization, discrimination and other social barriers and value cultural and ethnic diversity as a source of strength for society;
- x. **to improve** the quality of social services and ensure the equal access by all citizens by fighting corruption and poor administration of state institutions;
- xi. **to strengthen** the local communities and social networks by empowering the local self-government and supporting community based services;
- xii. **to encourage** the active participation in decision making of the people concerned with a view to transform them from welfare recipients to active citizens;
- xiii. **to support** civic and social ties and develop sound relationships between the state, market and civil society in order to establish solidarity;
- xiv. **to further value** NGOs as governments' natural allies in a strategy for social cohesion, due to their experience, insight and commitment in the field of social issues;
- xv. **to raise** public awareness on the principles of social cohesion through education and the media;
- xvi. **to take advantage** of regional cooperation for exchange of experience and transfer of best practices especially through the BSEC Member States which are also members of the EU;
- xvii. **to reactivate** the BSEC Working Group on Exchange of Statistical Data with a view to acquire specialized data.

9. **The Parliamentary Assembly** invites the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs to consider its Recommendation.