

PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION
PABSEC

DOC: GA 2982/97

Athens, 18 June 1997

THE NINTH PLENARY SESSION OF THE PABSEC GENERAL ASSEMBLY

RECOMMENDATION 20/1997¹

on

**“THE IMPROVEMENT OF CUSTOMS REGULATIONS OF THE BSEC
PARTICIPATING STATES”**

1. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation reiterates its commitment to work for the expansion of bilateral and multilateral economic cooperation among the BSEC Participating States as a vital tool for ensuring the progress and prosperity of the nations in the area.
2. Furthermore, the Parliamentary Assembly restates its belief that the member countries' sustainable development and their economic integration into the evolving European architecture, could be accelerated through their own economic integration.
3. In pursuit of these objectives, the very first Recommendation passed by the PABSEC was *Recommendation 1/1994* on the “*Improvement of Customs Regulations Among the BSEC Member Countries*”, adopted on 21 June 1994 in Bucharest, advocating the need for the reduction, or gradual elimination, of obstacles in regard to free trade, including those relating to customs regulations.
4. The Parliamentary Assembly also adopted *Recommendation 12/1995* and *Recommendation 16/1996* calling upon the National Parliaments and Governments of the BSEC Member Countries to undertake urgent steps in order to facilitate the harmonisation of their legislation in customs regulations.
5. However, up to this point minimal progress has been made. A significant number of factors still seriously hampers the expansion of trade volume between the countries of the Black Sea.
6. The Parliamentary Assembly commends the activities carried out by the BSEC in this field.

¹Assembly debate on 18 June 1997 (see DOC GA 2981/97, Report of the Economic, Commercial, Technological and Environmental Affairs Committee on “THE IMPROVEMENT OF CUSTOMS REGULATIONS AMONG THE BSEC PARTICIPATING STATES”, discussed in Yerevan on 27-28 March 1997; Rapporteur Mr. Theodoros Kassimis (Greece).

Text adopted by the Assembly in Athens on 18 June 1997

7. Streamlining a future strategy of the Black Sea cooperation process, the Heads of State or Government of the BSEC Participating States stressed in the MOSCOW DECLARATION of 25 October 1996 the importance of joint efforts by the member countries at giving impetus to the trade cooperation in the Black Sea region by accelerating the introduction of a regime of mutual trade preferences between the BSEC states, and examine in 1997 the possibilities for creation in the BSEC region of a free-trade area. Regulations concerning customs comprise a major issue in the process towards that goal.

8. The subsequent Special Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Ministers Responsible for Economic Affairs of the BSEC Participating States adopted on 7 February 1997 the DECLARATION OF INTENT FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BSEC FREE TRADE AREA, which constitutes a major step towards the further development of intra-regional trade in the area. The Ministers requested the Parliamentary Assembly to discuss this subject.

9. The Ministers of Trade of the World Trade Organisation signatory states held their first meeting in December 1996 in Singapore and adopted the SINGAPORE MINISTERIAL DECLARATION OF THE WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION, recognising that regional initiatives can promote further liberalisation and may assist developing and transition economies in their efforts to integrate into the international trading system, as far as it is ensured that regional trade agreements are complementary to the WTO and consistent with its rules.

10. The Assembly therefore:

A. Calls on the National Parliaments and Governments of the BSEC Participating States:

- i. **To provide** full support to the BSEC actions aiming at the conclusion of the Agreement on the BSEC Free Trade Area, including relevant provisions on customs regulations.
- ii. **To accelerate** the harmonisation of their national customs legislation in compliance to the international standards, particularly the provisions of the WTO Agreements and the EU procedures relevant to customs regulations.
- iii. **To gradually reduce and eliminate** the present disparities on customs legislation by concluding new bilateral trade agreements or revising the existing ones securing the compatibility with the international standards, thus paving the way for the harmonisation of the customs regulations among the member countries.
- iv. **To establish** an advisory body in the structure of the BSEC in order to ensure the flow of information, facilitating relevant studies and creating a databank on international and regional standards, as well as on national legislation of the BSEC member states governing customs regulations, called upon to make concrete recommendations to the Parliaments and Governments of the BSEC countries, aiming at harmonising national regulations.
- v. **To undertake** necessary measures expediting this process, by:
 - a. Forming a customs Working Group in the BSEC framework.
 - b. Establishing new free-trade zones among the BSEC countries, and jointly operating them in accordance to WTO and EU standard customs regulations.

- c. Establishing transparency in the publication and administration of trade regulations by notifying each other on all relevant regulations, as well as on the amendments to their existing legislation in regard to customs procedures.
- d. Simplifying customs clearance procedures and customs documentation.
- e. Reducing fees and formalities connected with the import and export of products and establishing conditions for mutual recognition of customs safety procedures.
- f. Enhancing the customs surveillance procedures against weapons and drugs trafficking as well as illegal exports of national heritage.
- g. Organising, with the support of the specialised UN agencies, the OECD, the EU, etc. training courses on customs procedures with the participation of the customs officials.
- h. Harmonising valuation of goods for customs purposes.
- i. Gradually reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers in trade of goods.
- j. Exploring the conditions that will lead to the mutual granting of trade preferences and/or Most Favoured Nation status.

B. Invites the BSEC Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs to consider this Recommendation.