



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION
PABSEC

INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT

Doc.: GA49/CC48/REC157/17

RECOMMENDATION 157/2017¹

***The Role of the Parliaments in Providing Sustainable Healthcare Systems
in the BSEC Member States***

1. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC) considers health to be one of the most significant elements of the human quality of life, and therefore an essential factor in the economic growth of every country in the Black Sea region. The Assembly extends full support to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), officially known as *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, promulgated by the United Nations (UN) and adopted by the Decision of the UN General Assembly in September 2015. In accordance with this agenda, the PABSEC endows special importance to global partnership and regional collaboration that aim to develop each Member State's healthcare systems and that enable international organizations to implement efficient and sustainable healthcare policies.
2. The PABSEC shares the global approach that focuses on the implementation of the SDG, particularly *SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages* and its 13 targets. Goal 3's agenda provides a comprehensive framework for all major health priorities, and is closely linked to other complementary goals. This framework — appropriately tailored to each country's specific political, legal, economic, social, and cultural circumstances — needs to be collaboratively adopted and implemented by the parliaments of the Black Sea region.
3. The PABSEC considers that parliaments and parliamentarians are primarily responsible for providing adequate, sustainable, and accessible medical services to their citizens. National

¹ Assembly debate on 5th July (see Doc.: GA49/CC48/REP/17, Report of the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee: *The Role of the Parliaments in Providing Sustainable Healthcare Systems in the BSEC Member States*, discussed in Baku on 25 April 2017; Rapporteur: Mr. Musa GULIYEV, Member of the Committee, Azerbaijan).

parliaments serve as pillars of democratic society. As such, they are entrusted with the prime task of enacting laws, rules, and regulations that foster good governance within societies and promote social well-being. Parliamentarians are also duty-bound to initiate healthcare reforms that create favourable conditions for their citizens' complete physical and spiritual development and for their long, healthy, and active lives.

4. The PABSEC is deeply concerned that healthcare in most Member States is seriously affected by several adverse factors: the economic recession, growing poverty, budgetary constraints, the rising costs of medical services, inadequate infrastructures, and the absence of proper mechanisms. Correspondingly, many Member States reflect negative statistics: shortened life expectancy, increased death rate and declining birth rate, little or low access to healthcare services, and financial burdens that negatively impact healthcare. Due to the lack of effective private insurance, the medical system restricts citizens' access to quality healthcare services, depriving them from access to the necessary — sometimes life-saving — medical assistance.

5. The PABSEC reaffirms its commitment to ensure that the parliaments of Member States take individual and collaborative action towards more efficient initiatives that promote effective multilateral cooperation, which calls for a dedicated implementation structure and systematic follow-up processes. The Assembly recognizes that such cooperation in all healthcare disciplines contributes significantly to the strengthening of bilateral and multilateral collaboration within Member States and plays a key role in ensuring their sustainable development, stability, and prosperity.

6. The PABSEC appreciates the efforts made by the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) within the framework of the Working Group on Health Care and Pharmaceuticals. The Assembly lauds the BSEC's initiatives for the practical implementation of the Declaration of the Ministers in Charge of Healthcare of the BSEC Member States on *Enhanced Tobacco Control Measures for Better Social and Economic Development* (Chisinau, June 2015), and affirms that strict compliance with 100 percent smoke-free public places is the only measure that will provide immediate positive health benefits and improved respiratory health, including a substantial reduction in the incidence of heart attacks.

7. The PABSEC welcomes the adopted Declaration of the Ministers in Charge of Healthcare of the BSEC Member States on *Network for the Emergency Preparedness and Response within the BSEC Region (NET-EPR) in the Field of Healthcare* (Athens, 29 September 2014), which encourages coordinated action and systematic knowledge sharing on health threats within the Member States, as well as the Declaration on *Cooperation in the Sphere of Quality, Effectiveness, and Safety Assurance of Medicines* (Moscow, 28 June 2016). The Assembly deems it necessary to provide fresh and effective impetus to the healthcare regime in the Black Sea region. To this end, it emphasizes that sustainable economic development is the essential foundation for a sturdy infrastructure that will enable progressive, reliable, and sustainable healthcare policies.

8. The PABSEC acknowledges that the International Health Regulations 2005 (IHR) promulgated by the World Health Organization (WHO) — an international legal instrument which is binding on 194 countries (including all BSEC Member States) — provides the appropriate framework to promote global health security through collaborative endeavours to combat microbial threats to health and safety. In this context, the PABSEC agrees that the parliaments of Member States share a common interest in equipping themselves with the

capacities and capabilities to detect, assess, and respond to public health threats in a timely manner.

9. The PABSEC welcomes the WHO's contribution and pioneering role in implementing the UN mandate for all countries and partners in all relevant sectors to work together in providing optimal technical support and mobilizing the necessary resources for the effective and timely implementation of the IHR. The Assembly endorses parliamentary initiatives which ensure that even citizens with inadequate financial resources have access to social and medical assistance. Such initiatives include disseminating objective and timely information to facilitate the necessary policy- and decision-making on healthcare, and providing the necessary framework for healthcare management and community participation.

10. The PABSEC notes that cooperation among the parliaments of Member States through bilateral or multilateral agreements, as well as their collaboration with international and regional specialized organizations, should be regarded as a potential mechanism for resolving complex and challenging healthcare issues in the Black Sea region.

11. Therefore, the PABSEC recommends that the parliaments and the governments of the BSEC Member States:

i. *encourage* the relevant national administrations to coordinate their healthcare-related activities, so as to allow the regular and systematic exchange of information on health threats and related issues;

ii. *develop* the appropriate regional strategies to build effective networks of competent health authorities in the region;

iii. *evaluate* the practical implementation of NET-EPR to ensure that it functions in accordance with the IHR, so as to ensure real-time knowledge sharing on health threats between the participating Member States;

iv. *consider* implementing the Memorandum of Understanding on *Information Exchange and Cooperation in the Sphere of Quality Assurance of Medicines*;

v. *develop* collaborative measures to combat the use of the substandard, falsified, and counterfeit medicines within the region;

vi. *exchange* information on national healthcare legislation, on best practices and advanced experience, and on methodologies that are presented at scientific meetings, forums, conferences, and seminars;

vii. *enact* effective national legislation that mandates healthcare protection as a fundamental human right (as enshrined in the European Social Charter of the Council of Europe) and a crucial factor in social development, that provides the necessary framework for healthcare management and community participation, and that ensures that people without adequate resources are entitled to social and medical assistance;

viii. *design* appropriate strategies for multisectoral collaboration and partnership between governments, the private sector, and national institutions (all of which are responsible for economic development, social affairs, education, the environment, and other healthcare-related

issues) and encourage the involvement of NGOs (which represent an important segment of modern society in the provision of social care services and private medical care);

ix. *enhance* cooperation in initiatives that promote sustainable healthcare and prevent the spread of infectious diseases, such as conducting emergency immunization campaigns;

x. *recognize* healthcare reform as an imperative priority in overall economic reforms, based on the principles of ethical values, solidarity, accessibility, universality, reliable financing systems, and similar measures to improve the quality of medical assistance and public health;

xi. *update* national legislation and regulations to conform with the international standards on healthcare protection, particularly by incorporating the Health 2020 European policy framework for healthcare laws and regulations;

xii. *formulate* healthcare strategies and effective mechanisms aimed at achieving the SDG, particularly Goal 3 on health and well-being;

xiii. *provide* full support to further all cooperative measures among Member States in the field of public health, such as: encouraging visits by representatives of ministries of health, universities, and medical establishments; organizing congresses and symposiums on specific healthcare topics; and conducting medical research programs and publishing scientific works that are of mutual benefit;

xiv. *develop* a common position on health problems in the region, within the framework of the WHO and other international and regional specialized organizations;

xv. *encourage* governments, public and private corporations, and nongovernmental and multilateral organizations to adopt the necessary measures to reach a regional consensus on achieving multilateral and bilateral agreements on healthcare policies;

xvi. *provide* the necessary support to the BSEC Working Group on Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals;

xvii. *implement* the regulations and legislation on private health insurance by deploying the best practices and experience of developed countries;

xviii. *ensure* that state medical insurance provides all citizens with equal access to the healthcare and to quality medical services;

xix. *develop* accessible and affordable private medical insurance schemes for citizens, ensuring the sustainable quality of the health services;

xx. *provide* full legislative support to pharmaceutical manufacturers and scientific researchers for the development and manufacture of high-quality medicines, thereby improving the quality level of healthcare systems.

12. The PABSEC invites the BSEC Council of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs to consider this Recommendation.