

RECOMMENDATION 138/2014¹

Role of Local Authorities in Strengthening Regional Cooperation between the BSEC Member States

1. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC) reaffirms its resolve to ensure that local authorities are duly empowered to realize their full potential in promoting better and more efficient regional cooperation. The Assembly believes that a higher level of active participation by local authorities will lay a stable groundwork for Member States to more effectively implement initiatives that promote economic, political, social, and cultural integration in the region.
2. The PABSEC recalls its Recommendation 85/2005 on the *Role of Local Governments in Strengthening Cooperation in the Black Sea Region*, which states that “the political support at local level is one of the major elements for successful development of regional cooperation. Each city, region or territory, different in area, population, geography, wealth, cultural heritage and environment develops its own sustainable vision and builds on its own identity with immense capacity to enhance regional cooperation. Implementation of shared policies for economic growth, environmental protection and social improvement at regional level increasingly involve local initiatives and consequently, local governments who enjoy the most privileged position to apply adequate solutions to the topical problems”.
3. The PABSEC emphasizes the valuable contribution of local authorities in promoting and stimulating multilateral regional cooperation, and reaffirms its support to the efforts of the Black Sea Capitals’ Association (BSCA) and the International Black Sea Club (IBSC) in promoting knowledge exchange among municipalities. Moreover, the

¹ Assembly debate on 13 May 2014 (see Doc.: GA43/LC43/REP/14, Report of the Legal and Political Affairs Committee “Role of Local Authorities in Strengthening Regional Cooperation Between the BSEC Member States” discussed in Moscow on 26-27 March 2014; Rapporteur: Mrs. Katerina Papakosta-Sidiropoulou – Greece)

Text adopted by the Assembly in Athens on 13 May 2014.

Assembly is keenly aware that practical, coordinated actions at the local level are vital for the fulfillment of the goals and objectives of the Black Sea economic cooperation.

4. The PABSEC acknowledges that several problems addressed by the *BSEC Economic Agenda – Towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership* (adopted in Istanbul on 26 June 2012) have their roots in local activities. The participation and cooperation of local authorities is a determining factor in fulfilling these objectives. Local authorities construct, operate, and maintain the economic, social, and environmental infrastructure, oversee planning processes, establish local environmental policies and regulations, and assist in implementing national and regional policies. Positioned at the level of governance closest to the people, they play a pivotal role in mobilizing public support to promote decision-making processes and implementation procedures.
5. The PABSEC highly values the Member States' efforts in consolidating multilateral cooperation, such as measures to improve living standards. The Assembly emphasizes the need to provide fresh motivation for the process of regional integration by developing new initiatives that are more effective in confronting contemporary and emerging challenges.
6. The PABSEC stresses that local authorities are expected to address social, cultural, economic, and environmental issues and to introduce new initiatives for enhanced public participation in the implementation of multilateral regional projects through the mechanism of public diplomacy. The proactive exchange of experience and knowledge between local governments provides significant added value to overall collaborative interaction in the region.
7. The PABSEC voices its deep concern over the prevailing unstable political climate and unresolved conflicts that undermine normal flow of multilateral cooperation and hinder the region from enjoying the full benefits of the economic cooperation process. Even countries which are not directly involved in conflicts are negatively impacted by the economic, social and political consequences of regional instability. An effective solution to deal with the range of regional problems is closely linked to efforts to establish lasting peace and stability in the region by political means, thereby countering the logic of force leading to a political impasse.
8. The PABSEC recognizes that efficient interaction among local authorities is essential for practical progress in resolving existing economic and social problems and also yields maximum benefits in terms of regional integration. Within the framework of multilateral economic cooperation, effective interaction facilitates a comprehensive and multidimensional approach to regional cooperation.
9. **Therefore, the PABSEC recommends** that the parliaments and the governments of the BSEC Member States:
 - i. *extend* the scope of economic integration in the Black Sea with the objectives of consolidating the process of establishing peace, security, and political stability, promoting greater synergy between Member States, and paying due regard to the role of local authorities in the successful realization of common tasks and goals of the BSEC;

- ii. *establish* a clear understanding of the roles and competencies of local authorities, identify strengths and competency gaps, and formulate viable initiatives to build a sector that is sustainable, efficient, effective, and responsive to regional needs;
- iii. *increase* the capacity of local authorities to enable timely implementation of the provisions of the *BSEC Economic Agenda – Towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership*;
- iv. *adopt* resolute measures to enhance the integration process in the Black Sea region, such as devising an adequate legal framework to strengthen the role of local authorities as an integral component in the national structure of each Member State;
- v. *ensure* that local authorities have the necessary powers and resources to identify the right balance between key processes (community engagement, governance, and decision-making) and management frameworks, in order to strengthen local involvement in the implementation of regional multilateral projects;
- vi. *accelerate* international, regional, and national progress in adopting policy measures to enhance cooperation between central and local governments;
- vii. *promote* political decentralisation and apportionment of powers based on the shared principles of accountability, transparency and the rule of law;
- viii. *prioritize* an upgrade of the existing legal and regulatory framework, so as to foster greater socioeconomic development in the region, address contemporary challenges, and exploit opportunities for regional cooperation;
- ix. *motivate* new initiatives (such as city/region twinning) that promote unity by bringing people closer together, building awareness among regional populations, and mobilizing public support;
- x. *extend* unstinting support to the BSCA and the IBSC in their efforts to create a framework for regular interaction among local government representatives as a significant component of the regional cooperation process;
- xi. *provide* all necessary assistance in developing various initiatives at local and regional levels that are targeted at a wider public whose involvement is essential for smooth functioning of the cooperation process;
- xii. *mobilise* public support for the implementation of regional and inter-regional projects, and follow up on sustainable progress in this regard by monitoring the implementation of multilateral documents adopted by the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and actively supporting initiatives that will enhance regional economic integration;
- xiii. *ensure* participation in regional and inter-regional gatherings as a knowledge-sharing mechanism to enrich regional cooperation with innovative concepts and elements formulated at global levels;
- xiv. *undertake* the necessary measures to ensure dissemination of information concerning the key role of local governments in promoting regional cooperation;
- xv. *foster* the development of strong and effective democratic local self-government and the establishment and growth of national local government associations

through initiatives, programs, and platforms for capacity building exchanges and partnerships;

- xvi. *ensure* that local authorities are granted the powers and competencies that will enable them to harness their full potential in promoting better and more efficient development of regional cooperation.

10. **The Assembly invites** the BSEC Council of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs to consider this Recommendation.