

THE TWENTY SEVENTH PLENARY SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Doc.: GA27/LC27/REC88/06

RECOMMENDATION 88/2006¹

On the role of civil society in strengthening the Black Sea Economic Cooperation process

1. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation is convinced that stronger partnership at all levels, including increased involvement of civil society, is vital for ensuring more efficient and consolidated economic, political, and social integration in the region. To this end, the Assembly states its commitment to fully combine its diverse strengths to meet the challenges facing the region amidst the rapidly changing international environment.
2. The Assembly recognizes the fact that civil society organisations have been adding a new dimension to traditional politics at national and international levels searching new forms of addressing the topical issues. Representative democracy has been an indispensable condition for stability and development, contributing to the consolidation of democratic values, social cohesion and solidarity. Civil society, being a driving force for democratic consolidation, where individuals with different ideals live together compatibly within a plurality of views, appears as a necessity for the efficient functioning of democratic societies.
3. Civil society as an essential pillar in promoting transparency, accountability and other aspects of good governance is well placed to work in complementary role to support regional processes through its unique experience in many different fields. Effective involvement of civil society at national and regional levels increases qualitative contribution to the ongoing endeavours and undertakings. The underpinning role of civil society in economic, political and social areas strengthens trust and cooperation, fosters stability, and contributes to build economic prosperity.
4. The Assembly welcomes the progress achieved by the BSEC member states, both individually and working in concert, towards reinforcing comprehensive national legislation and strategies aiming at strengthening democracy, market reforms, and local institutions that are important for materialising long-standing aspirations of the

¹ Assembly debate on 7 June 2006 (see Doc.: GA27/LC27/REP/06, Report of the Legal and Political Affairs Committee “The role of civil society in strengthening the Black Sea Economic Cooperation process” discussed in Athens on 3-4 May 2006; Rapporteur: Mr. Mehmet Sevigen – Turkey)

Text adopted by the General Assembly in Yerevan on 7 June 2006

peoples in the region for stability, prosperity and cooperation. The Assembly, therefore, expresses satisfaction with the fact that civil society sector has been experiencing phenomenal growth in the region. NGOs, as well as increasingly effective civic groups have been addressing a widening scope of topical issues. There have been many positive developments in the Black Sea region pointing to the growth and strength of the civil society.

5. The Assembly appreciates the existing cooperation with the NGOs in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation framework based on the significant contribution by civil society organisations, providing knowledge, raising new issues and concerns, lending expert advice in their areas of expertise. There is no doubt that enlargement of Black Sea Economic Cooperation context with more community involvement through wider array of sectoral activities will only enhance effectiveness of the cooperation process.
6. The Assembly expresses its deep concern that the long-term prospects are hampered by internal instability and interethnic tensions, still present in the region. The Black Sea countries acknowledging that civil society can contribute to conflict resolution through bridging social capital by means of trust and tolerance, call for prompt and peaceful solution to the persisting controversies in the region and state desire for reaching negotiated agreements based on justice and full respect for international law.
7. The parliamentarians of the BSEC member states remain united in their determination to spare no effort, both individually and collectively, to contribute to sustained development and significant improvement in the welfare of the people in the region. Bearing in mind that in the 21st century no solutions to topical social, economic or political problems can be reached without due involvement of civil society, the Assembly suggests taking necessary steps to engage NGOs more broadly into the Black Sea Economic Cooperation framework.
8. The Assembly believes that increased participation of civil society in the region will promote strengthening of social solidarity for meeting the goals and objective of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and will add value in the process of maintaining peace and political stability in the region.
9. **The Assembly, therefore, recommends** the parliaments and the governments of the BSEC Member States:
 - i. *to explore ways and means* to further intensify regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations through the joint and individual action taken by local, national and regional public authorities, in close cooperation with representatives of civil society and the private sector in promoting the goals of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation;
 - ii. *to support* the initiatives of non-governmental organizations in order to foster closer relations among the communities and peoples of the region;
 - iii. *to seek to involve effectively* the civil society organizations (CSO) in the process of regional integration;
 - iv. *to encourage* more active civil society organisations' participation in developing linkages in the region to perform an effective coordinating function for promoting cooperation through the establishment of regular contacts between their representatives and the exchange of information;

- v. *to provide resources for* creating or enhancing the mechanisms for strengthening civil society input into a regional intergovernmental structure with a view to corroborate partnership arrangements between NGOs, governments, and the public, in order to identify workable models;
 - vi. *to render necessary support* to development of a permanent structure or a framework for a regional dialogue among civil society organizations aiming at strengthening of a more cohesive sense of regional identity. Such structure or a framework could become a useful venue for consultations among national civil society organisations on key issues and developments;
 - vii. *to fully use the potential* of civil society networks for achieving wider public awareness on the activities in the Black Sea region and on latest developments in the region;
 - viii. *to facilitate* joint projects between CSOs with responsibilities in the same field with a particular emphasis upon topical regional issues;
 - ix. *to encourage* greater cooperation between governments, civil society and the private sector in the region through more effective collaboration and capacity building in order to develop new and dynamic policies and programs aimed at maximizing the benefits of community involvement in the regional processes.
10. **The Assembly invites** the BSEC Council of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs to consider this Recommendation.