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THE TWENTY THIRD PLENARY SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
LEGAL AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

# REPORT<sup>\*</sup>

FRAMEWORK OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE  
PABSEC AND THE EUROPEAN PARLAMENT

Rapporteur: Mr. Michael Yemelianov, Member of the Committee, Russia

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<sup>\*</sup> *Text considered by the Twenty Third Meeting of the Legal and Political Affairs Committee in Duress on 7 April 2004 and adopted by the Twenty Third General Assembly in Saint-Petersburg on 2 June 2004.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Legal and political Affairs Committee at its Twenty Second Meeting in Rostov-on-Don on 15 October 2003 was of the opinion that within the context of the enlargement of the European Union towards the South-East embracing some Black Sea countries it was expedient to take up the subject suggested by the Greek Delegation at the Chisinau General Assembly in June 2003 on the state of relations between the PABSEC and the European Parliament.
2. In this respect, the Twenty Third meeting of the Committee in Tirana on 7-8 April 2004 is dedicated to “the Framework of Cooperation between the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the European Parliament” with a view to elaborate the Report and the Recommendation for the profound discussions at the Twenty Third Plenary Session of the General Assembly in St. Petersburg in June 2004.
3. The Report benefited from the contribution by the national delegation of Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine. In addition, the reference material has been obtained by the PABSEC International Secretariat through the other related sources.

## II. FRAMEWORK OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

4. The present enlargement of the European Union appearing in two waves constitutes the most inclusive expansion of the boundaries of the EU tapestry. This enlargement process further increases particular challenge in the BSEC region and, at the same time, contributes to the overall development. The objectives sought by the BSEC countries for stable, open and pluralistic democracy governed by the rule of law underpinning a prosperous market economy with modern political, economic, social and administrative structures are in line with the common European values. The European Union standards and norms are taken as a basis when the Black Sea countries tailor their policies for economic management, political institutions and sustainable development.
5. The growth of the European Union brings about new conditions and opportunities for cooperation patterns in Europe underlining the need for more enhanced regional cooperation. Following the EU enlargement, with the prospect of Bulgarian, Romanian and Turkish accession, the future border of the EU will come to the Black Sea region occupying substantial part of the Black Sea coastline. The EU also has particular economic interests in the Black Sea region due to its geographical proximity and considerable potential with its rich natural and human resources. The EU enlargement to the East and subsequent development of its bilateral policies

towards the neighbouring countries and the adjacent regions will gradually strengthen the EU involvement in the Black Sea area. Enlargement of the Union to the East with the three Black Sea states will inexorably draw the European Union more into the affairs of the Black Sea region.

6. Against this background, cooperation between the EU and the BSEC in various fields shall become inevitable but rather complicated task due to existing status of the BSEC countries with the EU, current bilateral commitments, different approaches, policies and legal bases. According to the status of bilateral relations with the EU the BSEC countries can be grouped as follows: Greece - full EU member state; Bulgaria and Romania - having Europe Agreements are in the process of accession negotiations; Turkey - having Association Agreement has been accepted as an accession candidate; Albania – involved in Stability and Association Agreement is a future candidate state with a perspective of membership together with other Balkan countries (including prospective BSEC countries FYR of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro); Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine having Partnership and Cooperation Agreements.
7. In its Communication “Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours”, the Commission proposed that “the European Union should aim to develop a zone of prosperity and a friendly neighbourhood ... with whom the European Union enjoys close, peaceful and cooperative relations.” It stresses that “over the coming decade and beyond, the Union’s capacity to provide security, stability and sustainable development to its citizens will no longer be distinguishable from its interest in close cooperation with the neighbours.” The development of such a policy is a logical consequence of the enlargement, which, as stated in the Communication “gives new impetus to the effort of drawing closer to the 385 million inhabitants of the countries who will find themselves on the external land and sea border, namely Russia, the Western Newly Independent States and the Southern Mediterranean.”
8. As it was stated by the Committee in its previous Report “Although the new neighbourhood concept and existing regional initiatives imply strategy towards separate BSEC member states, the BSEC region as a whole is not considered by the EU as a dimensional target of its regional priority. In purely geographical point of view, the Black Sea region remains a missing ring in the chain of the EU initiatives and programmes for regional cooperation in neighbouring areas”.\*
9. It will be licit to assume that the BSEC countries find themselves rather in a perplexity at the upcoming consequences of the EU enlargement. While attractive benefits can be expected from the creation of a broadly integrated economic area, the differences between the EU border regions with the candidate and neighbouring countries in terms of socio-economic development may generate justified concerns

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resulting from the existing uncertainties. In particular, one cannot be sure as to whether the move towards the enlarged EU will be a driving force of a new growth or, on the contrary, just an element exacerbating disparities in social and economic progress between the countries in the region.

10. For this reason and in order to secure proper cooperation on the new frontiers the EU has to place more attention to its regional policies parallel to the enlargement negotiations. Fortification of regional cooperation and mutual understanding can positively contribute to a sustainable political and economic relationship between the EU and its neighbouring countries and over time reduce regional disparities. As the relationship with the Black Sea region develops as a whole, consideration should be given to ways to promote synergy for political dialogue. In this respect, promotion of cooperation at interparliamentary level may become especially useful.
11. Few institutions are more accredited than the parliaments or parliamentary organisations to gauge the desires of society and to serve as a link between citizens and the key players in integration processes. Representing the essence of the respective national societies and given the role of the legislative bodies in promoting and strengthening regional cooperation, it is important that the parliamentary system and political aspect is extended. National parliaments and regional parliamentary bodies have to become more effective in pursuing parliamentary diplomacy through strong ties between respective parliaments and parliamentarians by means of more intensive cooperation with their counterparts in the region and beyond it mobilizing necessary public support.
12. Speaking on the process of the EU enlargement, it is necessary to stress the substantial contribution by the European Parliament in promoting strategy towards stronger and wider Union. The European Parliament has generated the view on possible flexible process of the enlargement and boosted substantially the negotiating process. As negotiations move forward the European Parliament becomes increasingly involved in monitoring the process in the policy areas and the administrative capacity of the candidate countries to implement the European acquis. The European Parliament has played a key role in conclusion by the European Convention of the draft Treaty for the Constitution for Europe as well as in discussing and elaboration of the policies and approaches towards the new neighbourhood area and the neighbouring countries.
13. The national parliaments of the PABSEC countries as well as the Parliamentary Assembly itself have to spare no effort to meet the obligations to ensure that norms, standards, principles, policies and practices of the EU are promoted and shared, thus, securing peaceful and prosperous life of the peoples in the Black Sea region and integration into a common European space. It is in this respect, that the role of the parliamentary assemblies and participation of parliamentarians in international parliamentary gatherings raises as an effective mechanism for boosting common goals and addresses the main challenges facing our communities. Bilateral relations and interaction between the PABSEC member parliaments as well as partnership with

the interparliamentary organisations have immense contribution for promoting joint policies and enforcing democratic principles.

14. The cooperation between the national parliaments of the BSEC member states and the European Parliament has been developing intensively within different formats for cooperation designed for member and non-member countries. To this end, the meetings between the European Parliament committees and their counterpart committees from the national parliaments of the member states including the Hellenic Parliament have increased although many national parliaments express wish that the format of these meetings be revised with a view to increase their efficiency by means of more effective coordination and identification of more specific topics.
15. As for the interaction with non-member states, the European Parliament pursues the different patterns based upon a wide range of interaction. Joint Parliamentary Committees with Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey is an integral part of a structured political dialogue between the EU and these candidate countries discussing political priorities or concerns, administration capacity in view of EU membership, social situation, environmental issues, administrative reforms as well as developments in the enlargement process and the constitutional development of the EU.
16. A form of interparliamentary cooperation with the countries with the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine are implemented through the Parliamentary Cooperation Committees, the main purpose of which is to exert parliamentary control over the implementation of the agreements and to be an open forum for debate on questions of mutual concern including regional cooperation, international relations, social and economic reforms, democratisation, transport and energy issues, internal political situation, regional conflicts, rapprochement with Euro-Atlantic structures, etc.
17. Relations with Albania is covered by the Interparliamentary Delegation for South-East Europe embracing five South-East European countries focusing on the issues of democratic development, economic, administrative and judicial reforms, rule of law, illegal immigration, stability and security issues, etc.
18. Although the meetings between the European Parliament and the national parliaments of the BSEC member countries take place at regular intervals with the aim of exchanging experiences on the implementation and setting priorities in the region, the relations between the PABSEC and the European Parliament were not effectively activated until recently in spite of the fact that the latter has been vested with the observer status since the very establishment of the PABSEC.
19. The representatives of the European Parliament regularly attend the Assembly meetings since the Tirana General Assembly in June 2000.
20. In March 2002 the high level PABSEC delegation headed by the then PABSEC President and Chairperson of the Parliament of Georgia Mrs. Nino Burjanadze visited the European Parliament and discussed the possibilities for developing permanent

institutionalized structure between PABSEC and the European Parliament with Mr. Patrick Cox, President of the European Parliament, Mr. Julian Preistley, Secretary General and the members of the European Parliament involved in the relations with the national parliaments in the BSEC region. It was agreed then that the establishment of the EP-PABSEC cooperation would be beneficial not only for the two Assemblies but also for developing interaction at intergovernmental level. The European Parliament supported the idea of establishing a more permanent institutionalised structure in order to put the EP-PABSEC cooperation on a solid basis and noted the role of Hellenic Republic in this process as the only member both in the EU and the BSEC.

21. In February 2003 on the occasion of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO co-organised by the European Parliament, the PABSEC representatives had the meeting with Mr. Renzo Imbeni, Vice-President of the European Parliament discussing framework of future interaction between the PABSEC and the EP. It was stressed that the experience and knowledge accumulated in the European Parliament would be helpful for the PABSEC and agreed that more frequent contacts would pave the way towards better interaction at the level of parliamentarians and administrative staff. In this respect, it was suggested by Mr. Imbeni to evaluate possibility to benefit from EP “training” and “visitor” programmes designed for getting familiar with the work inside the committees, political groups and the secretariat.
22. In May 2003 another working visit was paid by the PABSEC representatives to the European Parliament. During the meeting with the Mr. Imbeni the interest by the Assembly to take advantage of the experience of the European Parliament in working with the national parliaments was stressed. The sides agreed that there was a need for a structured and programmed PABSEC-EP cooperation, which could include information exchange, participation in each other's meetings, study visits for parliamentarians to the European Parliament and traineeship programmes for PABSEC Secretariat staff and staff from the national parliaments of the PABSEC member countries. At this Meeting Mr. Imbeni also suggested that the PABSEC discuss the Communication from the European Commission to the European Council and the European Parliament “Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours” and present its opinion so that the views of the Assembly could be reflected in the relevant EP documents.
23. In its turn, the Assembly discussed the document at the PABSEC Committee Meetings in autumn 2003 and at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Plenary Session of the General Assembly held in Bucharest on 8-10 December 2003 and forwarded its opinion to the European Parliament that in the near future, the EU will eventually include 28 countries, which meant that four BSEC member states will be the EU members (Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey). These countries could play an important role as a bridge between the EU and the BSEC. On the whole, the Black Sea area will become not only a neighbour, but also a part of the European Union. It was also underlined that the EU enlargement should not lead to the emergence of new dividing lines in

Europe. At the same time, it was recognised that the EU may wish to consider developing ‘the Black Sea dimension’ in its policies towards the region.

24. The regular participation in the Assembly meetings by the representatives of the European Parliament and high level dialogue at various meetings between the PABSEC and the EP officials on many occasions provides a framework for intensified consultations and cooperation on different matters. Parliamentarians from EP and PABSEC discuss ways of strengthening ties, furthering the interaction and cementing more viable contacts between the two parliamentary structures.
25. Cooperation at the levels of the secretariats enhances dialogue and practical interaction. The officers of the PABSEC International Secretariat cooperate on a permanent basis with their counterparts at the Division of the Secretariat of the European Parliament, responsible for the relations with national parliaments and interparliamentary assemblies.
26. However, to improve the coherence and efficiency of the relations more attention should be paid to the political cooperation in a regional context and the benefits that complementary regional approach may bring. Development of a conceptual context for a regional approach to the Black Sea region has to be supported and complemented through viable bilateral relations in regional political cooperation. The active interaction of the Assembly and its member parliaments with the European Parliament shall undoubtedly pave the way towards constructive contribution to joint efforts and undertakings for enforcing the relations between the PABSEC and the European Parliament as well as between the BSEC and the EU.
27. As was noted in the Report of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Committee on the Black Sea Region within the context of the EU enlargement, the EU has to elaborate consistent approach towards the Black Sea region as a whole. In this respect, the pattern of Northern Dimension – a successful model for regional cooperation to be applied elsewhere in Europe – could become a dynamic framework for dialogue and cooperation constituting valuable link between the EU and the BSEC with a view that out of the 11 member states of the BSEC, four will be the members of the EU. Thus, the dense network of contractual relations with the countries bordering the Black Sea and the heterogeneity of the situation of each of them will be approached in a coherent way within a single policy context by the EU drawing together the totality of the EU’s approach to this neighbouring region. It is increasingly important that the synergies between all relevant EU policies and instruments are exploited in the context of the enlargement of the EU.
28. In this context, it is noteworthy to mention that within the framework of the Platform of Cooperation between the BSEC and the EU elaborated in 1999 and following the adoption of the Resolution by the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs on the BSEC-EU relationship in Yerevan on 18 April 2003 more concrete steps were made at the governmental level towards closer relationship and cooperation between the BSEC and the EU. It is in this spirit that within the mandate of the Working Group on Organisational Matters the analytical paper on state of affairs and

perspectives of the EU-BSEC cooperation. By adapting to the changing circumstances and aiming at concrete results, the BSEC will become able to meet the challenges ahead offering the EU to utilize instruments and mechanisms of cooperation by elaborating concept document along with the action plan for future outlining of the regional strategy towards the BSEC.

29. Furthermore, the regular contacts and furthered dialogue between the PABSEC and the EP will provide both sides with the opportunity to discuss ways on how to contemplate the actions to consolidate progress in cooperation between the BSEC and the EU. To this end, the European Parliament and the PABSEC may invite the European Council to consider at its nearest meetings the issue regarding the EU-BSEC cooperation with a view of the European Union's interest in the Black Sea region.
30. Taking all the above developments into consideration, the PABSEC has to seek for more comprehensive cooperation with the European Parliament based upon a solid pattern of interaction. To this end, as a concrete step promotion of bilateral cooperation between the two organisations could be viewed aiming at interaction, subject to the applicable rules of procedure, in the fields of mutual interest for reinforcing cooperation among the two parliamentary institutions and to facilitate discussion of major regional issues.
31. More strengthened relations between the two organizations can facilitate effective exercise of mutually complementary activities through participation of the representatives to each others' meetings at which the issues within the purview of the competence, activities and expertise of the two organizations are discussed and secure closer cooperation in undertaking joint efforts in particular areas of their activities for the benefit of the whole European family.
32. Fortifying the ties between the two institutions shall allow better expressing the will of the people at the regional and international levels.
33. A framework of cooperation has to imply also constructive cooperation at the level of the counterpart committees of the two organizations as well as for regular consultations and initiating of joint projects and programmes in the sphere of the specific expertise.
34. Effective cooperation between the two organisations will be complemented by the active interaction by the secretariats of the two organizations through arranging exchange of information and documentation relating to specific matters or activities of common interest.

### III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

35. The parliaments and parliamentarians of the BSEC countries remain united in their commitment to realize their full potential to foster in the region accelerated sustainable growth, good environment and improved social welfare where all



countries and societies enjoy security and stability and share common democratic values, thus, securing prosperous future for the Black Sea region and bringing its contribution to Europe's political and economic development.

36. Shared responsibility for the future of the Black Sea region allows the BSEC states to develop unprecedented multilateral cooperation covering a wide range of relations aiming at vibrant regional interaction and good neighbourly relations with adjacent regions.
37. Being an essential part of the European space, close and constructive cooperation with the European Parliament has been the constant conviction of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation since its very establishment. To this end, the Assembly has to continue its efforts for institutionalised relations between the PABSEC and the European Parliament.
38. The Assembly believes that the activities of the PABSEC shall support and complement to a certain extent the work of the European Parliament and shares the opinion that a permanent cooperation framework will diversify and strengthen this relation.
39. It is noteworthy to mention that the meeting of the special representative of the PABSEC President with the EP authorities is scheduled for May 2004 and it is expected that the issues regarding the future cooperation framework between the PABSEC and the European Parliament are to be considered.