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CULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

REPORT*

**“ENHANCING CULTURAL COOPERATION AND MULTICULTURALISM IN
THE BSEC MEMBER STATES”**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. “The Culture is the fountain of our progress and creativity and must be carefully nurtured to grow and develop.” (*World Commission on Culture and Development*). We have to agree that the quality of our lives depends, to a great extent, on the ability to develop and benefit from the culture. UNESCO notes that placing culture at the heart of the governmental strategies is both the condition for enabling sustainable development and a powerful driving factor for its achievement.

2. Culture can build, through adequate actions and measures, a communication process between the different communities and groups. Cultural diversity focuses on preserving cultural identities, in the clash of cultures, as a process that favours mutual understanding, based on cultural exchanges.

3. The Black Sea geo-cultural Region, bridging Europe and Asia, at the cross-roads of many civilisations and cultures, is an example of a culturally diversified area, characterised by a variety of historical roots, traditions and religions. The main wealth of the Black Sea region are the people living here-different peoples, with different cultures and traditions. That is why the BSEC Region is characterised by a great diversity with regard to ethnic groups and cultures. In this context, an important issue is finding new ways of bringing together multi-ethnic societies through the use of different forms of pluralism in order to develop and implement effective cultural policies.

4. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC) is deeply concerned about the challenges our region and world, as a whole, are facing today, including: conflicts and terrorism, high levels of economic and social inequality among the people, poverty, refugee crisis and huge migration waves. According to the UNHCR about 65.6 million people around the world have been forced from home by conflict and persecution till the end of 2016. Among them nearly 22.5 million are refugees, over half of which are under the age of 18. In world aspect among 110 people there is one refugee, but in the Black Sea region among 60 people there is one refugee.

5. All these challenges lead to the development of multicultural societies. The role of the politics in achieving the aims of the dialogue and the understanding among different cultures, is raising. It is largely in the hands of the political actors at all levels, from the local and national, to the regional and international arenas, to create an environment conducive to intercultural encounters and to make the different cultures live together in peace and mutual respect.

6. The BSEC Region has a great potential in terms of traditional values, diversity of expression, artistic creations and dynamic creative sectors. Thus, fostering intercultural cooperation through constructive dialogue and cultural exchange in all their tangible and intangible components, is a key factor to contribute to mutual understanding between peoples, communities and countries. Active participation and coordinated efforts at various levels of society – involving governmental, business and NGO dimensions – are essential elements of this process.

7. The role of the PABSEC in enhancing the cultural cooperation in the Black Sea Region is vital. We have to recall the Istanbul Summit Declaration on the Occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of the BSEC, wherein the Heads of State and Government underlined the essential

“role of culture in the development of the region” and took into consideration that “cooperation in the spheres of culture, tourism and youth policy creates better understanding among our peoples”.

8. Taking into consideration the importance of the cultural cooperation for a better understanding among the peoples inhabiting the BSEC Region, acknowledging the necessity of mutual respect, understanding and tolerance, wishing to strengthen their cultural ties, during the Conference of the Ministers in charge of Culture and Tourism of the BSEC Member States, held in Sochi, on 23 June 2016, a Joint Declaration was signed.

9. The current Report notes that the development of cultural cooperation and the mutual understanding among the people of the Black Sea Region should constitute a fundamental aim of the cultural policies of the BSEC Member States. An effective cultural policy implies new ways of stimulating creativity in all the sectors of economy, in technology, in industry and commerce, in education, in arts and in the social and community development. Even though the Black Sea Region has been inhabited by people with different cultures, religions and traditions, the countries of the wider Black Sea Region have a lot of similarities.

10. The parliaments and the governments of the BSEC countries have to exploit their possibilities at the utmost in order to boost the cultural cooperation in the Black Sea Region with a view of consolidating the process of establishing peace, security and political stability through greater cohesion between the Member States for the successful realization of shared objectives of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

11. The current Report and Recommendation benefited from the contributions of the national delegations of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Republic of Bulgaria, Hellenic Republic, Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Republic of Serbia, Republic of Turkey and Ukraine. Reference materials used for the preparation of the Report were obtained by the International Secretariat and through the Internet.

II. CULTURAL COOPERATION IN THE BSEC REGION

A. BILATERAL COOPERATION

12. The process of enhancement of the cultural cooperation in the BSEC Region is conducted mainly at bilateral level. Bilateral activities are carried out within the framework of signed intergovernmental agreements on cultural cooperation, memoranda and exchange programmes. These agreements provide the legal and, in some cases, budgetary framework for the cultural cooperation activities.

13. The main actors in developing government policy measures to support and enhance cultural cooperation in the BSEC Member States are the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Ministries of Culture. The bilateral cooperation programs mainly include projects in the fields of the theatre, dance, traditional arts, literature, inter-university cooperation, archaeology and cultural heritage, in general.

14. In cases when two countries have no official intergovernmental agreements, there are also independent projects involving cultural cooperation across the BSEC Region, initiated and managed by different NGOs, cultural organizations and foundations.

15. A bright example of the promotion of the cultural identity, traditions and language abroad, are the national cultural institutes. They give opportunity for the promotion and dissemination of each country's culture abroad, via organizing different events, competitions, festivals, exhibitions and other appropriate forms. It is vital for the member states to continue promoting the activities of their cultural institutes abroad.

16. Among the BSEC Member States we have the Heydar Aliyev Foundation (Azerbaijan) in Russia and Romania, the Romanian Cultural Institute in Istanbul, the Armenian Cultural Center in Moscow, the Hellenic Foundation for Culture in Belgrade, Bucharest, Sofia, Tirana and Odessa, the Bulgarian Cultural Institute in Moscow, the Moscow Cultural Centre in Sofia, etc. The national cultural institutes are funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture with the aim to enhance the cultural ties and relations between the countries.

B. CULTURAL COOPERATION WITHIN THE BSEC FRAMEWORK

17. The Assembly has supported and encouraged the ratification of the *Black Sea Convention on Cooperation in the Fields of Culture, Education, Science and Information (signed in 1993)*. The Convention constitutes a long-term legal framework for cooperation and is a solid foundation for the conclusion of other bilateral and multilateral cultural agreements.

18. The Convention recommends the governments to support the projects in the cultural sphere, to create conditions for the involvement of nongovernmental organisations, artists' and writers' associations, youth and children's organisations, private foundations, etc. in the Black Sea cultural cooperation process, in order to broaden and diversify the cultural contacts among the peoples living in the Black Sea Region.

19. The Parliamentary Assembly of BSEC, acknowledging the important role of cultural cooperation in reaching the objectives of BSEC, has adopted numerous Reports and Recommendations on cultural issues, such as:

- Ratification and implementation of the Black Sea Convention on Cooperation in the Fields of Culture, Education, Science and Information (rec. 3/1994);
- Joint Research Programme on the History of the Black Sea Basin (rec. 4/1994);
- Protection of the cultural heritage of the PABSEC Member Countries (rec. 6/1994);
- Guidelines of the Program of the Protection of the Cultural Heritage in the Black Sea Region (rec. 18/1996);
- The role of culture in the development of the BSEC region (rec. 70/2003);
- Preservation and enhancement of cultural heritage of the BSEC Member States (rec. 80/2004);
- The dialogue among cultures as a mean to build trust among the nations (rec.89/2006);
- The process of globalisation and the potential threat to the cultural diversity (rec.93/2006);
- Cultural Cooperation in the BSEC Region: Experiences, Opportunities, and Challenges (rec. 119/2010);
- Combating Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Heritage in the BSEC Region (rec. 148/2015).

20. The key priorities for the activity of the BSEC Working Group on Culture, as defined by the "BSEC Economic Agenda Towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership", are the following: Establishing a network of experts in order to promote research on the common cultural heritage of the Black Sea Region, including cultural tourism (development of "Cultural Routes"); Creation of museum networks, in different fields; Developing and promoting projects related

to the BSEC cultural heritage (movable/ immovable and tangible/intangible), whereas the priority shall be given to the transcultural elements.

21. In 2007, the *Ministers in charge of Culture* of the BSEC Member States adopted a Statement on enhancing cooperation in the field. As a follow-up, a number of project proposals, such as the “Networks of Cooperation in the Field of Contemporary Culture”, “Cultural Itinerary”, “Intercultural Dialogue”, “Cultural News of the Black Sea Region”, “Black Sea Cultural Project (Cilicia)” were initiated by the Member States.

22. During the *Conference of the Ministers in charge of Culture and Tourism of the BSEC Member States, held in Sochi, on 23 June 2016*, a Joint Declaration was signed. The signatories agreed to work together in the framework of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, to strengthen and boost the cultural and tourism cooperation among its Member States, to encourage creativity and to stimulate innovation in these fields. It was generally agreed on the need to explore the potential of the region in a systematic way, by developing joint innovative projects and by organizing international cultural and tourism events that will pave the way for further cultural and tourism exchanges, among them.

23. The Joint Declaration of the Conference of the Ministers in charge of Culture and Tourism (Sochi, 23 June 2016) also encouraged the implementation of *Cultural tourism / Cultural routes* projects in the Black Sea Region. Cultural Routes crossing several countries are a good means to promote the variety and complexity of the Black Sea Region’s cultural tourism. They also have the potential to be a sustainable and social model because they build on local knowledge, skills and heritage assets. Moreover, they often promote less known destinations, most of them in rural areas, thus helping to develop the economic potential of these areas.

24. The development of cultural routes may also strengthen the regional identity through discovering the BSEC Region’s common heritage and the promotion of cultural links and dialogue within the region as well as in other regions. These cultural routes may strengthen and expand the experience of cultural exchange and tourism through the involvement of different networks and associations, local and regional authorities, universities and professional organizations.

25. At present, the framework of cooperation within the BSEC in the sphere of culture is set by the *Action Plan for 2017-2018*, covering the period of Republic of Serbia’s term as a Country Coordinator of the Working Group on Culture. The general objective of the Action Plan is to strengthen the cooperation in the field of culture through: Promotion of cultural diversity of the BSEC Region; fostering mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue, respecting diverse cultural traditions and history of the Black Sea Region.

26. Joint projects among the BSEC Region include *Publication of a collection of the XX century works of the classic literature writers* and *Establishment of a “Black Sea Youth Symphony Orchestra (initiated by Georgia)*. These ongoing projects will unite the people of the Black Sea Region and will also serve to build networks and develop intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding, good neighbourhood relations and social cohesion.

27. The BSEC Working Group on Culture also supported the initiative of the *European Centre for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments* on the establishment of the institution of the *“Cultural Port of the Black Sea”*. This project aiming to enhance the cultural cooperation, includes development initiatives that connect across borders – transnational level, the Black Sea countries, particularly through the large ports currently active. In the meantime, the

initiative has been further promoted as a project proposal, by the consortium of interested institutions from a number of the BSEC Member States that have applied for EU funds.

28. During the term of the Republic of Serbia, as Country Coordinator for 2017-2018, have been scheduled the organization of the following events: *Archeological Film Festival and a Round table of experts on cultural heritage*, aiming the coordination and the joint actions of all the BSEC Member States. The Archeological Film Festival started on 22th of March 2018 in Belgrade. At the time being, the organization of the Round table of experts on cultural heritage has been postponed.

29. At the framework of the BSEC Working Group in Culture, the Republic of Serbia, as a country coordinator expressed the willingness to investigate the possibility of establishment of a network of experts on cultural heritage, based on the model already existing in the Working Group on Energy and report back to the Working Group on Culture during any of its next meetings in the spring of 2018. The country coordinator also intends to organize Meeting of the Ministers in charge of Culture in Belgrade in the autumn of 2018.

30. It should be noted that on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the BSEC Organisation, *the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS)* launched in 2017, a new initiative, the "BSEC Month of Culture", a month-long programme of cultural highlights from the 12 BSEC Member States. Being aware of the rich, diverse cultural heritage of the BSEC Region, the ICBSS within that project managed to promote the cultural identity of the region and enhance its visibility to the wider public.

31. The project, which was implemented in 2017, presented to the general public the achievements of the people of the Black Sea region in the field of literature, music, cinema, archaeological sites and gastronomy, including short videos and photos.

C. ASPECTS OF THE MULTICULTURALISM

32. Multiculturalism is a policy aimed at preserving and developing the differences of the national, cultural and religious minorities in a particular country, and defining such a policy as a theory or ideology. The concept of the multiculturalism started its development in the 1960s in Canada, Australia and the Scandinavian countries, primarily in Sweden. The term itself was introduced by some Swiss scientists. Despite all the differences, the theorists of multiculturalism believed that political and juridical institutionalization within the state was needed in a certain way within isolated ethno-confessional and ethno-cultural groups, which are living on their own rules.

33. There are two most common strategies of the multiculturalism. The first involves interaction and interpenetration of ethnic groups and cultures on the basis of active intercultural communication between the individuals in the multicultural state and society. In this case, the individuals, belonging to the ethnic groups retain their identity, but accept or must accept values and norms, so called "rules of the game", existing in this multicultural society, and actively communicate with the representatives of the different ethnocultural formations.

34. The second version of the multiculturalism relies on the principle of the so called "Sandwich civilization". In fact, it is a kind of concept of national-cultural autonomy. Its essence consists in recognition of the existence of groups of the population which have absolute independence within a certain society (state). They are part of the unified state formation, but do not intermingle and do not penetrate each other, only touching each other as a part of a

multi-layer sandwich. The state in this case is called upon to solve some general administrative issues.

35. The idea of the multiculturalism weakens the uniform legal field of the national state, which has been developed within the centuries. In a number of countries in territorial enclaves and actual ghettos there are immigrant communities, which values are often contradicting to the common national values. It is not surprising that the political leaders of the leading European countries, including Germany, Great Britain and France, declared that the project "multiculturalism" failed.

36. An important feature of Russia is the inclusion of various ethnocultural groups in its composition with the preservation of their national identity-without isolation and without assimilation. Russia is the bearer of unique experience of building multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society, in which representatives of different peoples and cultures, not giving up their identity, feel their belonging to the united country and the united culture. The experience of Russia is of a great interest as a model of the modern, successfully developing multiethnic legal state.

III. INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK

37. Placing culture at the heart of the governmental policy constitutes an essential investment in the world's future development and a pre-condition to successful globalization processes. It is UNESCO's mission to draw attention of the States to this important issue. In this regard, the major challenge is to convince political decision-makers to integrate the principles of cultural diversity and the values of cultural pluralism into all public policies, mechanisms and practices, particularly through public/private partnerships.

38. *At the regional level*, Culture is an essential component and a key factor for the effective delivery of the core mission of the Council of Europe: to promote human rights, the practice of democracy and the rule of law. Promoting culture as the "soul of democracy" means advocating strong cultural policies and governance aiming at: transparency; access; participation and creativity; respect for identity and diversity; intercultural dialogue and cultural rights, as the basis for a respectful and tolerant living together, in an ever-more complex world. One of the key instruments through which the European states, whether members of the Council of Europe or not, expressed their commitments to the cultural co-operation is the European Cultural Convention (1954). All the BSEC Member States ratified the Convention.

39. For the European Union (EU), culture is an important sphere of action, the legal basis for EU action in this field was introduced in 1993 with the Maastricht Treaty. The Maastricht Treaty opened up new opportunities for the EU, which was historically geared towards the economy and trade, to take action in the field of culture in order to safeguard, disseminate and develop culture in Europe.

40. The European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, announced by the EU is an opportunity to value the role of Europe's cultural heritage in fostering a shared sense of history and identity. This year will highlight cultural heritage as a resource for Europe, bringing multiple benefits, in terms of intercultural dialogue, social cohesion and economic growth, promoting the European dimension on the sector. In this context, EU-Western Balkans Heritage Route project was launched, aiming to promote a sustainable network of heritage sites in the Western

Balkans. The project includes among other countries: Albania, Serbia and Bulgaria. Romania and Greece have showed interest to be part of the project.

41. *The 2015-2018 Work Plan for Culture of the European Commission* is the main instrument to support cultural cooperation projects in Europe. The Plan, adopted by EU Culture Ministers in December 2014, sets out four main priorities for European cooperation in cultural policy-making: Accessible and inclusive culture, Cultural heritage, Cultural and creative sectors, Creative economy and innovation. With every EU Member States responsible for its own policy, the role of the European Commission is to help address common challenges, such as the impact of the digital shift, changing models of cultural governance and the need to support the innovation potential of the cultural and creative sectors.

42. *The Interparliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States (IPACIS)*, of which Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine are Member States, supports the development of the cultural cooperation through the Commission on Culture, Information, Tourism and Sport, which has elaborated numerous model codes, model laws and recommendations in the field of culture.

43. *The Central European Initiative (CEI)*, of which Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, and Ukraine are Member States, adopted an agenda for the period 2018-2020, which represents a roadmap aiming at promoting regional cooperation for enhancing democratic and inclusive societies and sustainable economies of CEI Member States. GOAL 4 of that roadmap is dedicated to cultural issues, such as: Intercultural cooperation and respect for cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and equal opportunities. The CEI believes that these are essential elements of conflict prevention and sustainable human, social and economic development.

44. *The Silk Road Programme* is a large project under the auspices of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the UNESCO. The BSEC was involved in a series of meetings organized by UNWTO. At those meetings, the emphasis was primarily laid on the tourism sphere, but a number of entities participating in the proceedings have drawn the attention on its cultural side as well. The Western Silk Road Working Group was established as well as the Western Silk Road University Research Group that will look into both tourism and cultural aspects of the Silk Road.

45. The Silk Road Programme organises and supports a number of international and regional conferences, networking events and workshops for Silk Road stakeholders, covering a variety of subjects, including: regional cooperation; product development and destination management; community-based tourism and heritage; marketing and statistics; communications and media. The Silk Road Programme currently comprises 33 countries, among which 9 BSEC Member States: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine.

46. *Balkans & Black Sea Cooperation Forum* is a regional rotating international Conference, aiming at highlighting cross-border cooperation, enhancing bilateral and multilateral relations, strengthening business opportunities and promoting economic growth and sustainable development among the States of the Balkans and the wider Black Sea Region. During the 2017 Conference dedicated on the Cultural tourism, the participants underlined the necessity to actively promote cultural tourism, as a key to sustainable development, for the benefit of all the peoples in the Balkans and the Black Sea Region. It was generally agreed that in order to

stimulate intercultural dialogue, prosperity and stability, the efforts of the governments should be directed to an increased support to cultural production, education, research and science.

The situation in the BSEC Member States

47. *The Republic of Azerbaijan* has become one of the centers of the World cultural and intercultural dialogue as an example of regulation and advancing relations between the world's civilizations, as a result of the purposeful and visionary policy of the President of the Republic, Mr. Ilham Aliyev. Upon the proposal of the president in 2008, the "Baku Process" was established aiming at development of the intercultural dialogue. Within these ten years after the announcement of the "Baku process" several international events and projects were held in the Republic of Azerbaijan. As a result of that successful process and activities, the 7th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) hosted by the Republic of Azerbaijan was held in Baku in April 2016. On 4-6 May 2017 the IV World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue, dedicated on the "Advancing Intercultural Dialogue – New avenues for human security, peace and sustainable development" was held in Baku under patronage and with the participation of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr. Ilham Aliyev in cooperation with UNESCO, the UN Alliance of Civilizations, the United Nations World Tourism Organization, the Food and agriculture Organization (FAO), Council of Europe, ISESCO. Many countries, as well as influential international organizations, have shown great interest to the forum. In the framework of the Forum, with the support of Mr. Ilham Aliyev and the first Vice-President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Mrs. Mehriban Aliyeva and the proposal of partner organizations, the foundations of different international initiatives were laid. An important initiative from the Azerbaijani side was the holding of high-level meetings of international organizations within the Forum. The purpose of the meeting was to define the mechanisms of organizing joint activities between world political, cultural, military, economic, social, financial and other international organizations through the first joint Discussions on the theme "Intercultural dialogue, peace, human security and sustainable development".

48. *The Republic of Bulgaria* carries out international cooperation in the field of culture through the Ministry of Culture. Its activity is carried out in several directions. In the framework of the cooperation and cultural exchange with the European Union there are different working groups, programmes, projects and initiatives, such as: Working Group 18 "Policy in the field of culture and audiovision, intellectual and industrial property protection" to the European Affairs Council; the Cultural Affairs Committee; the Audiovision Working Group to the Council of Ministers of the EU in the "Education, Youth and Culture" format; the European Network of National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC); the programmes "Culture", "Europe for Citizens", "Safer Internet". The international cooperation is carried out in accordance with the policy of the Bulgarian State in the field of international relations, the priorities of the development of the Bulgarian culture and is based on the existing legal basis. The Republic of Bulgaria promotes the Bulgarian culture abroad and has developed bilateral cooperation with over 60 countries in the world, including most of the Black Sea Region Member States, based on a well-substantiated and updated legal and statutory framework. The legal framework of bilateral international cooperation is subject to international agreements and treaties of bilateral nature and is governed by the requirements related to the nature and processes of integration of the country in international institutions and organizations, being based on the mutual interests of the development of cultural cooperation between Bulgaria and the country concerned. The legal contractual framework of bilateral relations is continuously updated and signing of new agreements is initiated, in accordance with the dynamically changing international setup. Due to its successful policy, Bulgaria has built an image of a stable partner in the international cultural policy and international relations. Major goals of that

policy are focused on the participation of Bulgarian artists in the arts market abroad, supporting the free movement of artists, of cultural values and cultural products, asserting the role and mission of culture as a tool for preventing and tackling crisis situations and conflicts, organising international bilateral events in the country and abroad, including representative exhibitions of national importance.

49. The Directorate for International and EU Affairs of the Ministry for Culture and Sports of *the Hellenic Republic* actively participates in the BSEC Working Group on Culture, which meets twice each year. Under the on-going joint project “Publishing a collection of the XX century works of the classic literature writers”, Greece has submitted the works of three classical literature distinguished authors, namely poems by Constantinos Kavafis, George Seferis and Odysseas Elytis. With regard to the Cultural Routes projects, which are among the Working Group’s top priorities, Greece submitted a proposal of the Numismatic Museum of Athens to develop a cultural project on “coinage route”, which has been initially supported by Armenia and Moldova. However, none of the cultural route projects proposed by the Member States at times has progressed or been adopted by the BSEC. Recently a proposal has been raised for the establishment of a Byzantine Route, which is at an early mapping stage. The European Center of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments has filed a proposal on the establishment of an institution called “the Cultural Port of the Black Sea”, which is supported by the BSEC PERMIS. According to a recent BSEC PERMIS update, the project was submitted to the EU for funding, in cooperation with partners from Turkey, Georgia, Romania and Bulgaria.

50. In the period 2015-2016, the Ministry of Culture of the *Republic of Moldova* coordinated the work of the BSEC Working Group on Culture. In this respect, the Ministry elaborated a Plan of Action for its mandate (2015-2016), which was considered, amended and adopted at the meeting of the Working Group on Culture on 21 April 2015. Taking into consideration the important role that the international organizations play in the wider Black Sea region in the field of culture, the priorities set up by the Republic of Moldova as country coordinator of the Working Group on Culture were: Cooperation within the frame of cultural heritage; Culture as a tool for regional, social and economic development and as a mean of promoting mobility of artists and youth; Sharing the best BSEC practices in implementing cultural policies. The mandate of the Republic of Moldova as country-coordinator of the BSEC Working Group on Culture stressed the importance of continuing discussions on the following topics: Fostering the efforts of the BSEC countries to protect and safeguard the cultural heritage in the Black Sea Region, through the promotion and adoption of new documents that would strengthen the framework for cooperation; improving the cooperation between BSEC and other international organizations, improving the projects and programs that support the mobility of artists, public servants and youth within the BSEC region.

51. *Romania*’s approach on the role of culture as a modality to understand the others, represents a good example of tolerance and multiculturalism. At the same time, Romania is actively involved in promoting intercultural dialogue (as a member state of the international cultural organizations belonging to EU and UN system). EU’s Council conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations underline that international cultural relations can only take shape by fostering cultural diversity within the EU, thereby empowering citizens to broaden their cultural appreciation and knowledge, stimulate their creativity and encourage mutual learning and dialogue that is nurtured over time, with a view to further developing intercultural competences and promoting intercultural dialogue. The government believes that an important aspect for the development of intercultural dialogue in the region is the academic exchanges and the scholarships programmes in the field of education. Within this context, the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania has a scholarship programme for citizens from all over the world, except from the EU Member States, offering 85 scholarships in the fields of culture and Romanian civilization, architecture and visual arts. The Ministry of Culture and National Identity of Romania is preparing the implementation of the UNESCO Project Culture for Development Indicators, which aims at creating a Romanian Cultural DNA, measuring the contribution that culture has to the sustainable development processes from different perspectives: economy, education, governance, social participation, gender equality, communication and heritage. The UNESCO Committee for the Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage decided in 2017 that the Romanian tradition of Martisor meets all the conditions to be included on the representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The proposal was submitted by Romania together with other two BSEC Member States: Bulgaria and the Republic of Moldova.

52. The bilateral cooperation between the BSEC Member States and the *Russian Federation* is carried out mainly at intergovernmental and interdepartmental level. Within the years agreements on cooperation in the field of culture, education and science between the Government of Russia and the Governments of Bulgaria (1993), Greece (1993), Moldova (1994), Albania (1995), Azerbaijan (1995), Armenia (1995), the Republic of Serbia (1995), Turkey (1995), Ukraine (1995), Romania (1997) have been signed. There are special regular renewable programs of cooperation between the Ministry of Culture of Russia with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Azerbaijan (for the 2017-2019 period) and the Ministry of Culture of Armenia (for the 2016-2018 period). An important role in the promotion of the national culture abroad and the development of intercultural cooperation is conducted by the exchange and "cross" years of Russia with foreign countries, where a significant place is given to the cultural and humanitarian component. Thus, in 2016 the exchange year with Greece took place. It is planned to be organized a "cross" year of culture and tourism between Turkey and Russia in 2019. The BSEC Member States participate in the days of spiritual culture of Russia. Thus, in 2017 in the city of Varna (Bulgaria) a Forum, dedicated on "spiritual and historical-patriotic routes of Russia and Bulgaria" took place, where a number of important agreements on interaction in the field of cognitive and cultural tourism were signed. In the BSEC Member States in the framework of the Russian Centers of Science and Culture (RCSC) regularly different events are held, aiming to popularize the Russian culture. For example, the Russian Cultural and Information Centre operates in Sofia, Bulgaria, as well as the Russian Center of Science and Culture in Athens, Greece. There are also Russian Information and Cultural center in Baku and a Russian center of Science and Culture in Chisinau.

53. The Ministry of Culture and Information of *the Republic of Serbia* has taken over the coordination of the BSEC Working Group on Culture for the 2017-2018. During the term as country coordinator, Serbia would like to highlight the role of Culture as a tool for social and economic development in the Black Sea Region. Cultural heritage represents an important resource for the development of every country and as a resource for the development of tourism serves as a sustainable development resource for local communities. As a BSEC Country coordinator on Culture, Serbia attaches great attention on the promotion of the cultural heritage, the development of "Cultural Routes" project, the "Cultural Port of the Black Sea", and the "New Silk Road". Important focus will be paid on the encouragement of participation in archaeological film festivals with a view to raising awareness and visibility of archaeological heritage and archaeological sites. Another topic of interest is the cultural exchange and protection of cultural expressions. This aim includes the encouragement of mobility of artists and professionals belonging to the field of culture and art (invitations to festivals and other events), exchange of best practices in the national policies, as well as protection of creative expressions in various artistic fields, such as literature, music, cinematography, local traditions

(crafts). The Republic of Serbia cultural policy encourages better cooperation with the international organizations, such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe, as well as with different cultural associations and institutions, aiming to enhance the cultural cooperation in the Black Sea region with a final goal of influencing the regional development.

54. ***The Republic of Turkey***, as one of the founding members of the Organization of the BSEC, has always considered as a priority area of its foreign policy the Black Sea Region. The General Directorate of Fine Arts of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism supports the bilateral cooperation in the Region and the organization of mutual events in the area of Music and Performing Arts. Furthermore, the General Directorate of Research and Education has made a proposal on the establishment of folk culture studies aiming to develop cultural dialogue and aspects of multiculturalism in the BSEC region. They consider that the exchange of experts on folk culture will enhance the bilateral cultural cooperation in the Region. The General Directorate of Cinema, on the other hand, considers that signing agreements for joint productions among the countries of the region, and increasing cooperation regarding cinema among the BSEC member states would be beneficial for the strengthening of the cultural ties among the countries. The Republic of Turkey has signed bilateral agreements with the following BSEC Member States: Azerbaijan (Cultural Cooperation Protocol, dated 13.04.2004), Georgia (Cultural Cooperation Program 2017), Moldova (Cultural Agreement, dated 03.06.1994), the Russian Federation Cultural and Scientific Cooperation Agreement, dated 19.07.1994), Ukraine (Cultural Cooperation Agreement, dated 27.11.1996), Bulgaria (Cultural, Educational and Scientific Cooperation Agreement, dated 14.12.1997), Romania (Agreement on the Establishment of Cultural Centers, dated 18.04.1996), Serbia (Cultural Cooperation Protocol, dated 19.02.2009), Greece (Cultural Cooperation Agreement, dated 14.02.2004).

55. ***Ukraine*** supports long-term and fruitful cooperation in the sphere of culture with the BSEC Member States. An agreement on cooperation in the field of culture and art between the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine and the Ministry of Culture of the Azerbaijan Republic, was signed on 24 March 1997. Also, a Program of cooperation in the field of culture and arts between the same ministries was adopted for the period 2016-2020. The Government of Ukraine has signed an agreement on cooperation in the field of education, science and culture with the governments of the Republic of Armenia (signed on 14 May 1996), Republic of Bulgaria (signed on 30 January 2003), the Hellenic Republic (signed on 11 November 1996), Moldova (signed on 20 March 1993), Romania (signed on 3 September 1992). Concerning Georgia, an agreement between the Government of Ukraine and the Government of the Georgia on Cultural Cooperation was signed on 13 April 1993, as well as a Plan for joint activities of the Ministry of Culture and Protection of Monuments of Georgia and Ministry of Culture of Ukraine for the 2015-2018 period (signed on 8 June 2015). Recently on 19 October 2017 the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine and the Ministry of Education, Culture and research of the Republic of Moldova signed a Program of cooperation in the field of culture between for 2017-2021. The same program was signed with the governments of the Hellenic Republic for the period (on 17 April 2002) and with the Republic of Turkey (signed on 22 December 2011). All agreements between the government and the Ministers of culture of the Ukraine and the Russian Federation have been ceased.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

56. The Black Sea Region is an area where numerous different cultures and religions interact. The cultural and historical heritage of the Black Sea Region shows many common features.

The cultural cooperation in the BSEC Region has a positive impact on the broader cooperation process and the peoples of the region, by enhancing mutual understanding, bringing economic benefits to the peoples and having a sustainability aspect for the societies of the region.

57. The BSEC Region enjoys remarkable cultural treasures, resources and values which play a major role in shaping its identity. Promoting intercultural dialogue and the respect for the diversity of cultures and arts remains a priority. Cooperation and cultural exchange play an important role in establishing constructive, sustainable relationships through dialogue and trust. This interaction involves communication and mutual respect among the representatives of different cultures.

58. The intercultural dialogue and cooperation in the cultural area could help the region to become more united and bring it near to a region with uniform characteristics or a uniform identity. Cooperation programs for cultural exchanges, regional festivals, folklore and handicraft fair, mutual investigation and research of cultural historical heritage are among the instruments which could enhance the cultural cooperation and create mutual understanding among the people in the Region.

59. The Assembly reaffirms its commitment to work more closely with the BSEC and its related bodies in the process of effective implementation of the “Economic Agenda towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership”, which constitutes the common program of action for the Black Sea Member States.

60. The BSEC and its Related Bodies could further enhance their cooperation in the field of culture, particularly by identifying priorities, developing joint strategies and programs in the BSEC framework, as well as seeking partnerships with other regional and international bodies, namely Council of Europe and UNESCO. This, in its turn, requires the effective involvement and active participation of the authorities at regional, national and local levels, as well as the representatives of the non-governmental organizations, the business and industrial communities, the scientific and technical circles, youth and the mass media.