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REPORT^{*}

ENHANCING COOPERATION BETWEEN THE PABSEC AND THE EUROPEAN PARLAMENT

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Legal and political Affairs Committee at its Thirty Fifth Meeting in Durres on 21 April 2010 was of the opinion that it was expedient to take up the subject on follow up the PABSEC Recommendation 76/2004 on “the Framework of Cooperation between the PABSEC and the European Parliament”.
2. In this respect, the Thirty Sixth meeting of the Committee in Brussels on 13-14 October 2010 is dedicated to the issue of “Enhancing 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 discussions at the Thirty Sixth Plenary Session of the General Assembly in Trabzon in November 2010.
3. The Report benefited from the contribution by the national delegation of Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Romania, Russia and Turkey. In addition, the reference material has been obtained by the PABSEC International Secretariat through the related Internet sources.

II. ENHANCING COOPERATION BETWEEN THE PABSEC AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

4. On 1 December 2009 the Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, signed in Lisbon on 13 December 2007 (“Treaty of Lisbon”) entered into force, bringing several changes in the institutional set-up of the European Union and equipping the Union with the legal framework and tools necessary to meet future global challenges. Treaty of Lisbon makes the EU more democratic, efficient and transparent. It gives citizens and parliaments a bigger input into what goes on at a European level, and gives Europe a clearer, stronger voice in the world, all the while protecting national interests.
5. Europe, as every part of the world, faces huge challenges in the 21st century those of economic crisis, climate change, sustainable development, energy security, fighting international cross-border crime, unresolved conflicts, etc. It was acknowledged that the existing treaties did not provide the European Union with the tools it needs to deal with these changes. It improves working methods to ensure that the Union does its business as efficiently and effectively as possible in the 21st century. It strengthens the role of the European Parliament and gives new powers to national parliaments. It makes decision-making at the European level more efficient and helps the EU to speak with a single voice in the world. It introduces new measures to tackle pressing issues while protecting the rights of each member state, especially in sensitive areas.
6. The Lisbon Treaty clearly sets out the European Union’s aims and values of peace, democracy, respect for human rights, justice, equality, rule of law and sustainability. The Lisbon Treaty pledges that the European Union offers people an area of freedom, security and justice without internal frontiers; works for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, with a high level of protection of the environment; combats social exclusion and discrimination and promote social justice and protection; promotes economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among member

states; remains committed to economic and monetary union with the euro as its currency; upholds and promotes the European Union's values in the wider world and contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the earth, solidarity and respect among peoples, free and fair trade, and the eradication of poverty; contributes to the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as the strict observance and development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter. The Lisbon Treaty implied important provisions in a number of new policy areas reinforcing the EU's ability to fight international cross-border crime, illegal immigration, trafficking of women and children, drugs and arms. Two other areas are especially relevant in today's world that of climate change and energy security.

7. A key aim of the Lisbon Treaty is to modernise the EU institutions, makes them more democratic and reinforces their powers. The Treaty of Lisbon does not fundamentally change the EU's institutional set-up, which is still based on its three main bodies: European Parliament, Council and European Commission. However, it introduces a number of new elements to make these bodies more effective, consistent and transparent, all in the cause of better serving the people of Europe.
8. The European Parliament is the only directly-elected body of the European Union. The Members of the European Parliament (MEP) represent the 27 EU Member States on behalf of the citizens. It plays an active role in drafting legislation which has an impact on the daily lives of its citizens. The Treaty increases the number of areas where the European Parliament shares decision-making with the Council of Ministers. That means that the MEPs have much more of a say on a wider range of issues. This sharing of power between the Parliament and the Council of Ministers known as co-decision will become the ordinary legislative procedure. With a strengthened role for the European Parliament and national parliaments, more opportunities for citizens to have their voices heard and a clearer sense of who does what at European and national level. A strengthened role for the European Parliament: the European Parliament, directly elected by EU citizens, is provided with important new powers regarding EU legislation, the EU budget and international agreements. Also, under the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Parliament's assent is required for all international agreements in fields governed by the ordinary legislative procedure.
9. Although national parliaments are not part of the EU's official institutional setup, they play a vital role in the operation of the EU. The Treaty recognises and strengthens the role of national parliaments. For example, if a sufficient number of national parliaments is convinced that a legislative initiative should better be taken at a local, regional or national level, the Commission either has to withdraw it or give a clear justification why it does not believe that the initiative is in breach with the principle of subsidiarity. The national parliaments at home will have greater opportunities to make a direct input into EU decision-making. National parliaments in each member state are given a greater role in examining EU laws before they are passed. A new early warning system gives national parliaments the right to comment on draft laws and to ensure that the EU does not overstep its authority by involving itself in matters that can best be dealt with at national, regional or local level. Together with the strengthened role for the European Parliament, it will enhance democracy and increase legitimacy in the functioning of the Union. National parliaments have right to information, the way they monitor subsidiarity, mechanisms for evaluating policy in the field of freedom, security and justice, procedures for reforming the treaties

10. These developments bring about new conditions and opportunities for interaction patterns underlining the need for more enhanced regional cooperation. The BSEC states are at various stages regarding their relations with the EU. *Bulgaria, Greece and Romania* are full-fledged EU member states; within the framework of the Decision of the Brussels European Council of 16-17 December 2004 the accession negotiations with *Turkey* were officially opened at the Intergovernmental Conference on 3 October 2005; *Albania and Serbia* are potential candidate countries for EU accession following the 2003 Thessaloniki European Council and have Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU; the EU relations with *Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova* are governed by the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements and they are part of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP); *Russia's* cooperation with the EU is based on "common spaces" covering priority issues although in 2008 EU-Russia Summit launched negotiations on a New EU-Russia agreement, which should update and replace the existing Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. As for *Ukraine*, it is a priority partner country within the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) provides a comprehensive framework for cooperation between the EU and Ukraine while at 2008 Paris Summit an agreement was reached to start negotiations on an EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, which is to be the successor agreement to the PCA.
11. 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. The national parliaments of the BSEC member states as well as the Parliamentary Assembly itself put every effort to ensure that European norms, standards, principles, 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 increase as an effective mechanism for boosting common goals and addresses the main challenges. Bilateral relations and interaction between the PABSEC member parliaments as well as partnership with the interparliamentary organisations have immense contribution for promoting joint policies in this respect.
13. The European Parliament Resolution on "A Black Sea Regional Policy Approach"¹ takes note of the existing relations between the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the BSEC and "considers it important to further encourage the parliamentary dimension of the cooperation between the European Parliament and the parliaments of the Black Sea countries".
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. The format of cooperation between the EP

¹ *European Parliament resolution on a Black Sea Regional Policy Approach, Strasbourg, 17 January 2008 (P6_TA(2008)0017)*

and the national parliaments of the EU member countries – *Bulgaria, Greece, Romania* – is regulated by the relevant provisions of the EP Rules of Procedure.

15. The European Parliament attaches great importance to maintaining close links with the national parliaments of the EU member states through regular meetings and aims at reinforcing the parliamentary dimension of the European Union by extending democratic control and accountability over decisions at the European Union level and ensuring more transparency and openness in the decision-making process. Based on the complementary nature of the responsibilities of the European Parliament and the national parliaments, the objective of the European Parliament is to develop overlapping networks in order to promote more parliamentary accountability and transparency and handle efficiently its links with National Parliaments. Within the framework of subsidiarity control, the European Parliament has a duty to communicate and promote the European perspective and the relevance of EU legislation and decisions. The relations between the European Parliament and national parliaments includes exchanges of visits and delegations, bilateral meetings between the corresponding committees of the European Parliament and the individual national parliaments, multilateral meetings between these committees in the European Parliament and all the national parliaments together, periodic meetings between the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament and delegations from the national parliaments, etc. *The Conference of Presidents* is responsible for relations with the member states' national parliaments. The European Parliament keeps the member states' national parliaments regularly informed of its activities. Some committees regularly invite members of the national parliaments to their meetings to discuss new Commission legislative proposals. *Conference of European Affairs Committees (COSAC)* consists of representatives of the European Parliament and of the committees dealing with European affairs in the national parliaments of the member states. It meets twice a year. It consists of six representatives of each of the Member States' national parliaments and six Members of the European Parliament, including the two Vice-Presidents responsible for relations with the national parliaments. *European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD)* promotes exchanges of information, ideas and experience on subjects of common interest to the European Parliament and the national parliaments; strengthens the existing close cooperation between the member parliaments' research and documentation departments in all areas of information; and exchanges and distributes studies carried out by the parliaments' research departments.
16. As for the interaction with non-member states, the European Parliament pursues the pattern of EP delegations that maintain and develop international contacts. Accordingly, delegation activities, on the one hand, aim at maintaining and enhancing contacts with parliaments of states that are partners of the European Union and, on the other hand, contribute to promoting in third countries the shared values on which the European Union is founded – the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law. EP's international contacts aim at fostering the parliamentary dimension of international relations.
17. The Joint Parliamentary Committee with Turkey is an integral part of a structured political dialogue between the EU and this candidate country 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. The EP delegation to the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) functions on the basis of the Association Agreement (Ankara Agreement of 1963), the Additional Protocol (Customs Union Protocol of 1970) and several parliamentary decisions both by the European Parliament and the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA). The EU-Turkey JPC is composed of an equal number of Members of the European Parliament and of the Turkish Grand National Assembly. It meets in general twice a year, alternately in Turkey or in one of the work places of the European Parliament. Since the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey the JPC holds discussions on the relations between the EU and Turkey, follows the progress of the accession negotiations.

18. Parliamentary dialogue between the EU and the non-EU countries of the wider Black Sea area has been taking place primarily at the level through the Parliamentary Cooperation Committees (PCCs) which have been established between the European Parliament and those of respectively Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine, 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.
19. The relations between the European Parliament and the parliaments of the republics of the South Caucasus - *Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia* - are conducted within the framework of the Delegation to the Parliamentary Cooperation Committees EU-Armenia, EU-Azerbaijan and EU-Georgia (PCCs). The Members of the PCCs are kept informed on the outcome of the Cooperation Council and the Committee (executive) and can express its view in recommendations addressed to the Cooperation Committee, the authorities of the partner countries, the European Commission and the Council. The European Parliament Delegation to the EU-Armenia, EU-Azerbaijan and EU-Georgia PCCs is composed of 18 members and 13 substitutes. They hold two meetings per year: one in one of the working places of the European Parliament and one in the respective countries. It is estimable that the European Parliament has enhanced attention to the region. As in May 2010 European Parliament adopted the Resolution on “The need for an EU strategy for the South Caucasus”² which we believe will contribute to strengthening relations of the republics of South Caucasus with the EU in general.
20. The task of the *EU-Moldova* Parliamentary Cooperation Committee (PCC) is to consider all aspects of relations between the EU and the Republic of Moldova. It is an open forum for debate on matters of mutual interest. It meets twice a year: one of the working places of the European Parliament and once in Chisinau. The EU-Moldova PCC is composed of an equal number of Members of the European Parliament and Members of the Moldovan Parliament. The PCC expresses its views in forms of recommendations addressed to the Cooperation Council, the European Commission and the Moldovan authorities.
21. The European Parliament delegation to the *EU-Russia* Parliamentary Cooperation Committee serves as a platform for the development of political and economic cooperation and for continued dialogue between the two parliamentary institutions. The EU-Russia PCC is composed of an equal number of Members of the European Parliament and of the two chambers of the National Assembly of the Russian Federation, the State Duma and the Federation Council. The PCC meets once or twice a year in one of the working places of the

² *European Parliament resolution on the need for an EU strategy for the South Caucasus, Strasbourg, 20 May 2010 (P7_TA(2010)0193)*

European Parliament, and also has regular Working Group meetings in different places in the Russian Federation. The PCC follows and discusses the achievement of the objectives set out in the PCA. It also acts as a forum for dialogue and debate on issues of mutual interest as well as with Russia's political leaders, members of the Federal Assembly, government and representatives of civil society.

22. The European Parliament delegation to the *EU-Ukraine* Parliamentary Cooperation Committee under a clear framework for the development of political and economic cooperation between the two sides. The EU-Ukraine PCC is composed of an equal number of Members of the European Parliament and of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Underscoring the strategic importance of the bilateral relations, the PCC meets twice a year, alternately in one of the workplaces of the European Parliament and in Ukraine. In addition to the PCC meetings, the delegation holds regular meetings to discuss important developments in the EU-Ukraine relations and to exchange views with Ukraine's political leaders.
23. Relations with *Albania and Serbia* are covered by the Delegation for relations with the countries of South-East Europe (DSEE) focusing on the issues of democratic development, economic, administrative and judicial reforms, rule of law, illegal immigration, stability and security issues, etc. The present inter-parliamentary relations with Albania and Serbia have an annual cycle.
24. In 2008, the European Union took the decision in principle to boost the strategic cooperation with the six former Soviet Union republics that are neighboring eastern border of the European Union (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine). The Summit on the Eastern Partnership initiative in Prague on 7 May 2009 adopted the Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit inviting "the parliamentarians from the European Union and the partner countries to come forward with ideas regarding the European Parliament's proposal to establish a EU-Neighbourhood East Parliamentary Assembly (EURO-NEST PA). EURONEST will be composed of 120 Members: 60 Members from the European Parliament and 10 from each of the six countries. The EP Delegation to the EURONEST multi-lateral Parliamentary Assembly was created by decision of the European Parliament on 6 May 2009. EURONEST will be the institution for multi-lateral parliamentary dialogue and exchange among the Eastern partners and between the MEPs and their Eastern partner countries' homologues in several areas of common interest: stability, democracy, legal and standards approximation, trade, energy, people-to-people contacts and many others. Preparatory work carried out by the EP Delegation includes the discussion and further elaboration of the modalities of work and of the rules of procedure for the future Assembly. The last such preparatory meeting took place in Brussels on 10 June 2010.
25. The cooperation between the PABSEC and the European Parliament dynamically develops starting with 2000 through maintaining political dialogue between the two structures and the exchange of information. The delegations of the Assembly on many occasions have visited the headquarters of the European Parliament in Brussels and the observer status of the European Parliament with the PABSEC gives it the right to participate and express opinion in meetings of the Assembly.

26. The European Commission putting forward a concept of Black Sea Synergy in its Communication of 11 April 2007³ noted the advantage of the useful contacts already existing between the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the BSEC.
27. In March 2002 the high level PABSEC delegation visited the European Parliament and discussed the possibilities for developing permanent institutionalized structure between PABSEC and the European Parliament. 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 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.
28. In May 2003 another working visit was paid by the PABSEC representatives to the European Parliament. During the meeting the EP Vice-President 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, 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.
29. In May 2004, the special representative of the PABSEC President, Mr. Konstantin Markelov, Deputy Head of the Russian PABSEC Delegation, paid a working visit for holding consultations with the leadership of the European Parliament. The main subject of the talks was the consideration of the ways and means for strengthening the organizational basis for interaction between the PABSEC and the European Parliament, its upgrading to a qualitatively new level with due regard to the ongoing European Union enlargement process, the consequences of wider EU involvement in the developments in the Black Sea region and developing inter-parliamentary cooperation in the context of mutual interest of both sides.
30. At the 23rd Plenary Session of the PABSEC General Assembly in Saint-Petersburg in June 2004 the issue concerning cooperation between the PABSEC and the European Parliament was discussed. The Recommendation 76/2004 was adopted on "Framework of Cooperation between the PABSEC and the European Parliament".
31. Discussions at general debate of the 25th Plenary Session of the General Assembly in June 2005 on "Enlargement of the European Union and the Black Sea Region: New Models of Cooperation" became a logical continuation of the Assembly activities and the efforts by the BSEC Hellenic Chairmanship-in-Office (October 2004 – April 2005) carried out under the general motto "to bring the BSEC closer to the EU".
32. The issues of cooperation between the two organisations was attributed in the framework of the discussions at the Parliamentary Conference on "The Wider Black Sea Region in the New European Architecture" organised in Athens in April 2005 by the Hellenic Parliament within the framework of the program of the BSEC Hellenic Chairmanship with the support of the International Center for Black Sea Studies and active participation by the Parliamentary

³ Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament "Black Sea Synergy - A New Regional Cooperation Initiative" (*Brussels, 11.04.2007 COM(2007)160 final*)

Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. The Participants placed special emphasis upon the growing role of the PABSEC in paving the way towards deeper cooperation with the European Parliament aiming at enhancing the existing cooperation framework for more comprehensive interaction based upon a solid pattern and seeking the due recognition of the BSEC by the European Union and institutionalization of the relations between the BSEC and the EU.

33. The 26th Plenary Session in Tirana in November 2005 discussed the issue of “Cultural, Educational and Social Aspects of EU enlargement: consequences for the Black Sea region” and adopted Recommendation 86/2005 on the subject.
34. In February 2006 Mr. Miroslav Ouzky, Vice-President of the European Parliament, accompanied by EP staff, paid a working visit to the PABSEC International Secretariat. He stressed the great importance attributed by the EU to the states of the Black Sea region as the space of possible further enlargement of the European Union. At the same time, he noted that the European Union recognises its responsibility to promote stability, security and sustainable development beyond its limits, which has been reflected in the European Neighbourhood Policy embracing most of the BSEC member states.
35. In February 2007, within the framework of further developing cooperation between the PABSEC and the European Parliament and at the invitation of the EP Foreign Affairs Committee, the PABSEC representative delegation paid a working visit to the European Parliament, where the need to step up PABSEC-EP cooperation both on a political level.
36. In June 2007, the PABSEC General Assembly in Varna adopted the Report and Recommendation on “Partnership and cooperation agreements with the BSEC Member States in the Context of the EU enlargement”. The main topic of the General Debate at the Varna Session was “The Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the European Union: New Euro-Black Sea partnership”. Within the framework of further cooperation between the PABSEC and the European Parliament and at the invitation of Mr. Georgi Pirinski, PABSEC President and President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, the European Parliament delegation participated in the Varna Session.
37. In June 2007, a series of consultations were held between the delegation of the European Parliament and PABSEC national delegations, where the members of the EP delegation reaffirmed the growing interest of the European Union in the Black Sea Region. Following the initiative of the second-largest, Socialist Group in the EP on expanding ties with the Black Sea countries, a new initiative concerning the region was being considered by the European People’s Party, the largest political group in the EP. The parties agreed to continue their political consultations with a view to contributing to the preparation of the relevant Reports in the European Parliament and promoting a closer interaction between the Black Sea countries and the European Union.
38. In December 2007, the PABSEC General Assembly assessed the reports of the national delegations of the PABSEC on “The Role of the National Parliaments of the BSEC Member States in the EU process” and considered the conclusions of the joint PABSEC-ICBSS Seminar on “The Role of the Parliaments in Shaping New Relations between the European Union and the Black Sea Region’ held in Athens on 8 November 2007.

39. In October 2008, Mr. Marek Siwiec, Vice-President of the European Parliament paid a working visit to the PABSEC International Secretariat. He was informed that the Assembly draws special attention to strengthening of interaction with the European Parliament. To this end, he noted that the PABSEC finalized the work over the draft Terms of Reference of the Permanent Delegation for Cooperation between the PABSEC and the European Parliament with a view to enhancing interaction between the PABSEC and the European Parliament. Mr. Siwiec stressed the interest of the EP in strengthening cooperation with the PABSEC and trust and understanding in the Region. Mr. Siwiec underlined the importance to sustain continuity in developing relations between the European Parliament and the PABSEC and the necessity for coherent implementation of the agreements reached earlier.
40. In November 2008, the PABSEC Standing Committee adopted the Terms of Reference of the Permanent Delegation for Cooperation between the PABSEC and the European Parliament and circulated the communication for the delegations for nominating its representatives.
41. In October 2009, Mr. Michael Yemelyanov, Chairman of the PABSEC Legal and Political Affairs Committee paid a working visit to the European Parliament with the aim to introduce PABSEC activities to the new leadership of the European Parliament and its political groups and to speed up the process of taking decision on institutionalization of the relations with the PABSEC. The programme of the visit envisaged meetings with the Vice-President of the European Parliament Mr. Libor Roucek and the MEPs representing main political groups, who at the same time are the members of the EP Foreign Affairs Committee. The sides stressed the importance to ensure continuity in the relations and finding due mechanism in the framework of the existing schemes of cooperation within the European Parliament. Also the growing interest of the EP towards the Black Sea region and the necessity to enhance cooperation with the PABSEC as a truly operational parliamentary organization in the region was stressed. At the same time, the importance of establishment of personal contacts between the MEPs and MPs from PABSEC was noted. Mr. Pascu (Group of Socialists and Democrats) came up with the initiative to gather informal group of MEPs “friends of PABSEC” which could promote establishment of a permanent mechanism of cooperation. During the meeting with the representative of the Group of European People’s Party, Vice-Chairman of the Delegation to the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly Mr. Ungureanu the issue on providing support from the PABSEC to the initiative of the parliamentary dimension of the Eastern Partnership was raised and proposal was made to consider the issue of observership in this organization. Mr. Kazak (Group of Alliance of Liberals and Democrats) underlined the wide-ranging activities of the PABSEC and stressed that in his capacity as the Deputy Ombudsman of Bulgaria, he had participated in the Meeting of the Ombudsmen of the BSEC member states organised by the PABSEC. During the meeting with the member of the Bureau of the Group of European People’s Party, Vice-Chairman of the Delegation to the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly and a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee Mr. Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, the sides exchanged views on many topical problems in the region including growing importance of the Black Sea region for the EU and present stage and perspectives of cooperation between the PABSEC and the European Parliament. Mr. Saryusz-Wolski suggested to follow the pattern of the Working Group on Western Balkans within the Foreign Affairs Committee and to set up a similar working group for interaction with the Black Sea region.

42. In March 2010, Mr. Libor Roucek, Vice-President of the European Parliament paid a visit to the PABSEC International Secretariat. He was informed that the Permanent Delegation for Cooperation with the European Parliament was set up. The Secretary General also expressed wish that the process for setting up respective structure in the European Parliament be expedited in order to intensify interaction between the PABSEC and the European Parliament. Mr. Roucek noted that the European Parliament is interested in strengthening cooperation with the PABSEC and stressed that intensification of the cooperation will positively contribute to enhancement of bilateral relations, but warned that European Parliament will need time to set up a relevant structure for this cooperation. He stressed that there was a possibility to set up a working group in the framework of the Foreign Affairs Committee, which will comprise of representatives of different political groups.
43. 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 consultations and cooperation on different matters. Parliamentarians from EP and PABSEC have on many occasions discussed ways of strengthening ties, furthering the interaction and enhancing more viable contacts between the two parliamentary structures.
44. 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.
45. 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 regional approach may bring. Development of 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 national 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.
46. On its side, the BSEC has often referred to a stronger parliamentary dimension both of regional cooperation within the wider Black Sea area and with regard to its interaction with the EU. The document 'BSEC-EU Interaction: The BSEC Approach' (Istanbul, 17 January 2007) refers to the parliamentary level of cooperation as follows: "...Given the potential impact of inter-parliamentary cooperation, especially in fields such as legislative reform and good governance, a structured and regular relationship between the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC) and their respective specialized Committees would add a strong parliamentary pillar to meaningful BSEC-EU interaction.

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

47. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation maintains close consultations with the European Parliament to further promote possible modalities for enhancement of constructive cooperation between the PABSEC and the EP.

48. The Assembly believes that its activities will support and, to a certain extent, will complement the work of the European Parliament in the wider Black Sea region. The PABSEC shares the opinion that institutionalized framework of cooperation will further enhance and diversify the existing cooperation process.
49. To this end, the PABSEC seeks to make joint efforts with the European Parliament to establish more comprehensive framework of cooperation framed along commonly shared objectives by using the instruments that they have at their disposal promoting international parliamentary dialogue. Such a cooperation framework may also imply meetings at the level of the counterpart committees as well as initiating of joint projects and programmes in the sphere of the specific expertise.
50. There is no doubt that the regular participation in the Assembly meetings of high representatives of the European Parliament and maintenance of high level dialogue at the meetings between the PABSEC and the EP officials further promote the interaction between the two parliamentary structures.
51. Given the fact that the PABSEC has already set up a Permanent Delegation for Cooperation between the PABSEC and the European Parliament, the European Parliament could speed up the process of taking its decision on setting up an adequate structure. At the same time, the Assembly has to make maximum use of common membership of Bulgaria, Greece and Romania in both organizations as an advantage in promoting adoption of the relevant decision.
52. Further enhancement of cooperation between the two organizations along with expanding the personal contacts between the MEPs and the PABSEC MPs will allow better realize the will of the peoples in the region and will help achieving synergies in undertaking joint efforts in particular areas of activities.
53. It is equally important that the national parliaments of the PABSEC enhance their cooperation with the European Parliament within the existing bilateral and multilateral frameworks for debate on questions of mutual concern meeting the needs of parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue.
54. Enlargement of relations complemented by the active interaction between the secretariats through exchange of information and documentation will add value to the process of enhancing cooperation between the PABSEC and the European Parliament.
55. Cooperation between the PABSEC and the European Parliament will give new impetus to deepening regionalism in the wider Black Sea area for the benefit of realization of common objectives of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and will promote interaction between the EU and the BSEC.
56. The parliaments and parliamentarians of the BSEC member states are committed to realize their full potential to promote international partnership for building better future, meeting the contemporary challenges and fostering sustainable environment in the region for all the countries and peoples to enjoy security, stability and democratic values.