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REPORT^{*}

PABSEC in the Wider Black Sea Region: 20 Years of Regional Cooperation

Rapporteur: Mr. Enver YILMAZ, PABSEC Vice-President (Turkey)

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Fortieth Meeting of the Legal and Political Affairs Committee in Athens on 17 October 2012 took the decision to evaluate the Black Sea economic cooperation process from the perspective of the twenty years' experience of regional cooperation in the wider Black Sea region.
2. The state of international relations has undergone profound changes over the past two decades. The countries became increasingly dependent on one another in confronting new and emerging challenges. The wider Black Sea region takes strategic position on the crossroads between north and south, east and west. It is a key knot in the transport, energy and trade routes and also is located as an important sea motorway. Against this background the prospects for multilateral cooperation in the region have been enhanced while the countries in the region need to strengthen coordination in addressing common problems.
3. Over the last twenty years, the BSEC has become an effective platform for promoting the realization of the aims of mutual partnership and took an important constructive role in developing a new model of regional cooperation promoting development and prosperity.
4. Within this context, the Forty First Meeting of the Committee in Brussels on 25 April 2013 takes up the subject "PABSEC in the Wider Black Sea Region: 20 Years of Regional Cooperation" with a view to elaborate the Report and Recommendations to be submitted to the Spring Forty First Plenary Session of the PABSEC General Assembly.
5. The present Report can be considered as evaluation of the activities of the Assembly, on the one hand, and examination of the new developments, on the other. It also traces the challenges in the light of new vision of global response to the challenges of national regional and international cooperation. The Report stresses the necessity for further enhancement of economic cooperation in the wider Black Sea area aiming at more consistent and coordinated partnership. It underlines the need for the best use of available possibilities and resources to promote, expand and multiply regional cooperation with the aim to turn the Black Sea into a sea of peace, stability and prosperity, enhance good neighborly relations, mutual respect and dialogue.
6. Although the national delegations did not forward any contributions for the Report and Recommendation many issues raised in the report are taken from the interventions by the Heads of the National Delegations made at the Extraordinary Meeting of the PABSEC Standing Committee in Istanbul on 26 February 2013 marking the Twentieth Anniversary of the establishment of the Assembly. At the same time, the additional material was obtained by the PABSEC International Secretariat from the official sources of the BSEC bodies and other international organizations.

II. COOPERATION IN THE WIDER BLACK SEA REGION: TWENTY YEARS OF REGIONAL EXPERIENCE

7. With the establishment of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation in Istanbul on 25 June 1992 the history has given the people of the Black Sea region a good opportunity to shape regional development vision and to identify commonly agreed objectives. The leaders of the member countries have seized the opportunity to launch a new partnership for common prosperity for generations to come and have embarked on the mission to

change the negative situation of the past into a positive asset for the future. With this initiative nations of the wider Black Sea region were brought together to open up new economic prospects, strengthen democracy and improve the quality of life in the Black Sea region laying down stronger foundations for the expansion of friendly cooperation between the member nations in all fields of life.

8. The Istanbul Summit Declaration of 25 June 1992 stated the common vision of democratic, prosperous, peaceful and united Black Sea region. It stressed main trends in the political and economic life of the region - “profound and rapid changes in Europe and determination of peoples to shape up a new era of peace, stability and prosperity ... the potential of the BSEC participating states and the opportunities for enhancing the mutually advantageous economic cooperation in the fields of ... achievement of higher degree of integration of the participating states into the world economy” and formulated a comprehensive agenda for the cooperation “transport, communications, informatics, standardisation, energy, tourism, agriculture, health, science and technology, development of business, SMEs, trade, investment and capital, free economic zones, banking and finance, etc.” The Istanbul Summit was an event of profound importance as the leaders and the peoples of the BSEC countries embraced a common vision of the future and a common strategy for achieving it. These principles have been guiding the whole BSEC process in subsequent years.
9. The challenge of ensuring that economic progress becomes a reality in the lives of the peoples of the Black Sea region and further steps to spread the benefit of progress to every member of society was once again reiterated in the Istanbul Summit Declaration on the Occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (Istanbul, 26 June 2012). The Document states that “the main pillars of BSEC have been all-inclusiveness, transparency and regional ownership and through its commitment to enhanced dialogue and pragmatic approach, BSEC has brought together its Member States with different political, economic and social characteristics in a spirit of confidence and constructive cooperation”. The Declaration also underlines the significance of multilateral economic cooperation as a means for contributing into to enhancing peace, stability, security, dialogue and prosperity in the region to the benefit of the peoples.
10. Regional integration plays increasingly important role in economic and political life of individual states and the global policy. The on-going regional and sub-regional integration processes become important aspect of the contemporary world order bringing countries and peoples closer together and enhancing comprehensive joint initiatives and programmes. Integration generates new frameworks and worldviews that pave the way towards more dynamic intra-, inter-regional and international cooperation, thus, establishing more stable and coherent political environment and foster democratic development, sustainable economic growth and political stability.
11. The very philosophy – sub-regional economic cooperation is an effective confidence-building measure – serves as a building block in the new European architecture, contributing to indivisible, comprehensive and cooperative security. It is in this framework, that the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, acting in the spirit to turn the Black Sea into the sea of peace, stability and prosperity, provides an instrumental framework for interaction and dialogue on a wide range of economic issues and initiatives for the BSEC member states. The progressive economic integration gradually makes states more open for intensification of political and economic cooperation

reinforcing establishment of prosperity, stability, mutual trust, opening up the opportunities for reconciliation and narrowing the room for confrontations.

12. As stated in the Yalta Summit Declaration, “in the 21st century the role of the Black Sea region, both in world politics and in the global economy, will grow substantially due to its strategic location and vast economic potential. ... This requires a new BSEC economic agenda for the future to meet the challenges of the new era of globalisation, ... to stimulate economic growth and innovation, to create employment and build on the synergy that exists between our countries.”
13. Over the past twenty years the concerted efforts of the BSEC member states have consistently promoted the enhancement of regional partnership. The BSEC has served as an effective tool for increasing dynamism and strengthening practical approach in the development of the regional cooperation through a complete framework for dialogue and mechanism for exchanges. The BSEC employs a range of mechanisms for regular meetings and exchanges at different levels, including meetings between heads of state and government, meetings between ministries, meetings between the various departmental heads, and meetings between national coordinators, etc. The BSEC has adopted huge number of the important documents. It has elaborated many important projects in a number of priority areas of regional development, such as trade, transport, energy, communications, environmental protection, health care, agriculture, tourism, prevention of technological disasters and combating crime. Together, these mechanisms and documents form the core elements for more enhanced cooperation in the region.
14. The BSEC provides an enormous potential for development. As the BSEC continues to grow in strength, the cooperation is enhanced with incredible potential. Each of the member states makes its utmost to bring the unique advantages into play to contribute to the realization of common goals and pragmatic projects. The BSEC process through its mutually supportive intergovernmental, inter-parliamentary, banking, business and academic dimensions constitutes viable mechanism for facing the risks and challenges of the twenty-first century.
15. The Black Sea countries, on every occasion, have stated their commitment to the achievement of higher degree of regional cooperation. As stressed in the BSEC Economic Agenda Towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership: “ In twenty years, BSEC has become the most inclusive and comprehensive organization in the wider Black Sea area. Today, BSEC, consisting of 12 Member States and having 17 Observers and 17 Sectoral Dialogue Partners, is a solid institution with a Permanent International Secretariat and four Related Bodies, namely, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC), the BSEC Business Council (BSEC BC), the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB) and the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS). The Member States are determined to make use of the great potential of the Organization as a platform of dialogue to play a more proactive, effective and constructive role in promoting the common goal of a peaceful, stable and prosperous BSEC Region to the interest of all stakeholders in the spirit of partnership and entrepreneurship. For this, a new vision and framework for joint action is needed to give new impetus to economic regeneration in the region for the next ten years. Taking into account the developments that have taken place since the establishment of the BSEC both inside the Organization itself and in the broader international environment, including the EU enlargement process and the new challenges in the region, the Member

States reiterate their commitment to enhance the economic mission of BSEC and implement the BSEC Economic Agenda. ”

16. The BSEC Economic Agenda towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership provides a roadmap outlining the framework for joint action that is needed to give new impetus to economic regeneration in the region to further reinforce the economic dimension of the Organization with more project oriented initiatives and actions. The main priorities of the Economic Agenda are: pursuing sustainable development; strengthening the project-oriented dimension of the BSEC Organization; cooperation with international and regional organizations and institutions; intensifying intra-regional trade and investment; cooperation among the customs and border crossing administrations; establishment of efficient transport network; sustainable energy; environmental protection; food security and safety; healthcare; tourism and protection of cultural heritage; sustainable development of SME sector; closer cooperation in the field of banking and finance; information society; exchange of economic and statistical data; education; good governance and the rule of law; combating organized crime, terrorism, corruption; cooperation in emergency situations; etc.
17. The Economic Agenda for the future has become a deep shared conviction and a strong commitment to set up a roadmap in order to reach efficient solutions to the problems of concern. Mutually supportive efforts of the member states further enhance economic cooperation in the region and lay down the foundation of stability, social cohesion and overall progress.
18. The economic cooperation brought the countries closer together generating new frameworks for partnership and development. Yet, in order to unlock the region's full potential for the integration it is important that the political declarations are translated into a clear sense of full commitment to the outlined goals, as well as into a dynamic move along the realistic lines for their implementation.
19. The experience of the past years shows that the regional cooperation is not just an economic issue and that the regional process cannot be separated from the factors that influence societies – ideological, social, cultural, political, economic dimensions. It is important to make full use of the existing mechanisms and platforms to bring into play political and economic potential to ensure that more substantive progress is made in the process of economic cooperation.
20. To this end, it is imperative to encourage mutually beneficial relations conducive to a steady process of economic cooperation, to preserve the achievements, further develop peaceful and friendly coexistence realized through mutual respect and confidence by countries with different backgrounds and cultures. It is an absolute necessity to deepen and expand the scope of on-going cooperation process and make optimal use of the potential of the countries in the region.
21. The cooperation component of the BSEC process has an important impact in establishing stability in the region. The model of economic cooperation helps to remedy political tensions and, in its turn, settlement of political problems boosts the process of integration. Resolution of the existing problems can be possible only with due regard to the interests of all parties, through their involvement in a process of negotiations and dialogue built on the principles of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation.

22. It is obvious, that unstable political climate, unresolved conflicts and security concerns in the region undermine normal economic activities leaving the region uncertain for further socio-political developments. The required level of regional solidarity in a as complex region as the wider black sea region needs time to fully develop. On the other hand, establishment of strong economic ties helps to remedy and settle many political disputes. Historically established ties, shared past and present as well as clearer perception of the advantages and common interests will help to achieve common objectives by coordinated initiatives at regional and international levels. Within this context, it is important to develop, further formulate and implement necessary stability policies in a new sense of partnership and cooperation, based on trust, confidence and a higher level of political and economic collaboration.
23. Integration is a product of cooperation and partnership based upon the common interests and visions of the group of countries. In order to meet the challenges of the 21st century, the Black Sea countries have to work further together and give a new impetus to the cooperation for sustaining regional prosperity and stability. Closer interaction of the BSEC member countries with the European regional and sub-regional structures will multiply the links and create the milieu of trust, partnership and understanding.
24. The EU enlargement towards the East and the growing interest shown by the EU towards the Black Sea region has provided a powerful incentive for the BSEC states for accelerating reforms in terms of consolidating political and economic stability. Establishment of a credible and predictable path for the Black Sea countries wishing to integrate with the European Union through the different EU programmes for non-member countries provide a strong incentive to reform and cooperate. Some of the BSEC member states harmonize their policies with European Union standards and norms which actually provide effective framework for improvement of economic management and strengthening of political institutions.
25. The European Union has already made major efforts to stimulate democratic and economic reforms, to project stability and to support development in the Black Sea area through wide-ranging cooperation programmes. Moreover, it has contributed to a whole range of sectoral initiatives of regional relevance. These include key sectors such as energy, transport, environment, movement and security.
26. The Communication of the European Commission, dated 11 April 2007, on “Black Sea Synergy – A New Regional Cooperation Initiative” stresses that the moment has come for increased European Union involvement in further defining cooperation priorities and mechanisms at the regional level. It is an initiative complementary to the existing policies that focus political attention at the regional level. The primary task of Black Sea Synergy is the development of cooperation within the Black Sea region and also between the region as a whole and the European Union. The Black Sea Synergy is intended as a framework to ensure greater coherence and policy guidance.
27. Being an essential part of the European space, the BSEC region has to seek for its due recognition by the European Union and through the joint efforts of the BSEC, the PABSEC and other related bodies has to seek for institutionalized relations between the BSEC and the EU and the PABSEC and the European Parliament.
28. A successful strategy for the accelerated development and regional integration must be built upon the shared commitment working towards political and social stability within

the region and a determined effort to implement consistent stabilization policies and deep structural, institutional and social reforms.

29. Individual actions as well as mutually supportive efforts further enhance the integration process. Partnership enhances prosperity, progress enriches and fosters the spirit of the BSEC community, promotes economic stability and sustainable development which in turn enhances stable and coherent political environment with the concept of political stability and security in the region and beyond.
30. Along with the comprehensive economic programmes the social dimension should be also addressed, as the ultimate goal must be formation of open, tolerant and cohesive societies that provide the foundations for a stable and prosperous region.
31. Significant synergies may be achieved by coordinated initiatives at regional and international levels as well as regional cooperation with further integration with European and world-wide structures.

III. PARLIAMENTARY CONTRIBUTION

32. The establishment of the PABSEC in 1993 was the response on the part of national parliaments of the member states to the challenge addressed by Heads of the BSEC states through voicing their political will to cooperate in the area of peace, security, stability and prosperity by dealing with the grave economic, political, cultural and other issues. The Parliamentary Assembly of the BSEC has been focusing its endeavors to further strengthen the role of political dialogue for the achievement of the BSEC goals, as well as to utilize methods and forms of parliamentary diplomacy to provide and facilitate legal ground for the realization of the principles and goals embodied in Summit Declaration and Bosphorus Statement signed on 25 June 1992.
33. Since the very establishment the Assembly consistently advocated close cooperation with BSEC as a prerequisite of achieving the common goals of the Black Sea cooperation process. Every document elaborated within the Assembly stresses the value of collaborative partnership and deepening mutual trust and cooperation for reaching the shared goals and objectives. They emphasize such qualities as harmony, respect for cultural variety, good neighborliness and mutual trust as essential components of openness and flexibility that sparks necessary synergies multiplying partnerships with common interests and complementarities.
34. The Declaration of the Assembly on the Twentieth Anniversary of the Establishment of the PABSEC affirms its belief in the concept of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), which is based on good will and a mutual commitment to strengthen constructive cooperation in the region in order to meet the common goals and principles of the Declaration of the Istanbul Summit, the Bosphorus Statement, and the Declaration on the Establishment of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. It declares full support for the action taken by the BSEC to develop closer economic cooperation in the region and the resolve to make every effort to ensure that the PABSEC evolves into a more effective instrument for addressing the priority tasks by equipping it with the necessary resources and tools to implement the adopted decisions and recommendations.
35. For twenty years, the PABSEC has accomplished considerable work on the implementation of the priority tasks and objectives of the regional cooperation; on the

approximation of the national laws and sharing of legislative experience; and on the development and application of principles, rules and procedures of international and national laws in specific areas, with the aim to better achieve the desired goals and measurable results at the national, regional, and global levels.

36. The Assembly has been providing the framework of cooperation between and among the parliaments of the member states with the necessary flexibility in order to deal with the problems inhibiting cooperation. Flexibility is a characteristic that constitutes a substantial constituent in the effort for creating a climate of trust through dialogue and joint activation towards the achievement of set goals. The institutionalization of the parliamentary dimension in the form of the PABSEC has created an additional mechanism for spreading intentions, initiatives and sentiments of the society of citizens, represented in parliaments, to governmental circles.
37. Recognizing the need for the parliamentary support to complement the actions developed and executed within the BSEC framework, the Assembly has elaborated and passed over 130 Recommendations covering quite a number of the important issues in almost every sphere of life. These documents contain recommendations on concrete initiatives intended to promote the overall development cooperation among the countries in the Black Sea region. In this connection, the Parliamentary Assembly has focused on the improvement of the follow-up mechanisms in order to undertake necessary action for the implementation to the fullest extent possible of the Assembly Recommendations.
38. Having in mind the common vision of the regional cooperation as a part of the global integration process, the PABSEC has intensified its relations with international parliamentary institutions, to become more active in seeking new ways and means for international support for the initiatives within the BSEC framework.
39. The cooperation between the PABSEC and the European Parliament has started since 2000 through political dialogue and information exchange. Since then, the Assembly has hosted the representatives of the European Parliament at every Plenary Session strengthening the relations in any given opportunity. The frequent visits of the PABSEC delegations to the European Parliament in the course of recent years further enhanced the cooperation. In 2007 the PABSEC set up a Permanent delegation for Cooperation between the PABSEC and the European Parliament with a view to enhancing interaction between the PABSEC and the European Parliament. 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.
40. The Assembly took lead in reviewing national legislations in order to eliminate or amend certain provisions which may prevent the process of harmonization of legislation necessary for materialization of the multilateral projects within the BSEC framework.
41. At the same time, with the aim to underpin the activities carried out by the BSEC countries towards integration, the PABSEC initiated cooperation among the governors and mayors of capital cities of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation member countries in 1994. The initiative generated from the conviction that local authorities, pooling their experience and expressing their views on everyday problems encountered by citizens,

may render to the regional integration process new dimension and make valuable contribution to attaining the BSEC goals and objectives. Three Round-Table Meetings of the Governors and Mayors of the Black Sea Capitals were held under the auspices of the PABSEC in Istanbul in 1994, in Kyiv in 1995 and in Bucharest in 1998. These meetings provided a framework for the exchange of experience towards innovative approaches and solutions for their development necessitated by the demands of the 21st century meeting the objectives of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. The initiative of the Assembly to bring closer the capital cities of the BSEC member states subsequently grew into the permanent structure of the Black Sea Capitals' Association (BSCA), which held its Assemblies respectively in Ankara in 2000, in Athens in 2001, in Baku in 2002; in Chisinau in 2003 and in Moscow in 2004.

42. The political support at local level is one of the major elements for successful development of regional cooperation. Implementation of shared policies for economic growth, environmental protection and social improvement at regional level increasingly involve local initiatives and consequently, local governments who enjoy the most privileged position to apply adequate solutions to the pressing problems concerning citizens. Local governments have wide responsibilities and the ability to develop integrated approaches in working with their communities promoting dialogue and peace through peoples' diplomacy and cooperation. The exchange of experience and knowledge between local governments, with the involvement of the communities provide significant added value to the cooperative interaction stimulating tolerance, friendship and mutual understanding.
43. Strengthening of cooperation between and among local governments in the Black Sea region becomes important factor since it bears the opportunity for communities to interact and participate. The local level governance, with its close contacts to its citizens is the best channel to promote regional and national policies through wide range of activities raising public awareness on the processes in the region and mobilizing public support for concrete undertakings. Consequently, the PABSEC has to concentrate more attention to providing overall support for strengthening the capacity of the local authorities and increase of the role of the regions based upon the European and global experience
44. Having in mind the growing role of civil society and civil society organizations in the world at large and in the region in particular, there is a need for more reflection on how non-state actors should be related to regional cooperation process in more dynamic engagement of broader society. It is obvious that Black Sea Economic Cooperation might have been more effective had the community been more involved in it through wide array of sectoral activities. There is no doubt that enlargement of Black Sea Economic Cooperation context with such involvement will only enhance effectiveness of the cooperation process. It will ensure better integration using more comprehensive scope. Beyond the institutional relationships, the 'people to people' links that develop across national borders reinforce the momentum for regional cooperation and integration. Increasing links with regional civil society formations and a growing awareness of the need to build regional solidarity to address common concerns is very much important.
45. The PABSEC has initiated many interesting undertakings during the past twenty years like organization of the Children and Youth Festival of the BSEC Member-States "Golden Ferry", Meetings of the Public Television Broadcasters from the BSEC

Member-States, the Forum of the Presidents of the Constitutional Courts of the BSEC Member-Countries, and organisation of the Conference of Ombudsmen of the BSEC Member States. In the last years the PABSEC has supported the organization of the business forums parallel to the PABSEC General Assemblies. All these initiatives served to bringing together the various segments of Black Sea Economic Cooperation process.

46. Through a more active cooperation of the parliaments of the region, further possibilities shall be provided for establishing a series of mechanisms for strengthening the political and economic dialogue and the equal partnership among BSEC member states through adopting policies aimed at peace, stability and prosperity in the region. To this end, the Assembly has to be more active to endorse new initiatives, foster new laws and multilateral conventions designed to promote materialization of the commitments and principles laid down in the statutory documents of the BSEC and the PABSEC.
47. Meeting the challenges of the new millennium, the Assembly has to strengthen its role and dedication to become an active player within the wider Black Sea Region and in every particular member state. To this end, the PABSEC has to initiate steps to commend the necessary enhancements with a view to revitalize and strengthen the role, authority, effectiveness and the efficiency of the Assembly and its International Secretariat.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

48. The contribution of the founding fathers of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation is immense and valuable in placing the economic cooperation and integration among the top priority objectives in the wider Black Sea region.
49. Looking back on the twenty years' experience since the 1992 Istanbul Summit, there is much to be proud of. Through collective commitments, concerted efforts and converged policies the BSEC member countries continue to tackle issues of prime importance expanding networks of friends, partners and allies. The Black Sea Economic Cooperation process reached the remarkable improvement in regional relations. Direct contacts, formal or informal, have raised mutual confidence and trust and this is helping to overcome the existing prejudices.
50. Over the past years the BSEC has managed to tackle the important economic issues and has reached tangible progress. A big number of mutually beneficial projects have been elaborated within the BSEC framework towards greater regional integration. Infrastructure has been at the heart of BSEC projects and the two major BSEC projects - the Black Sea Ring Highway and the Motorways of the Sea in the BSEC Region – has reached their final phase. When fully functional, these projects will have a profound impact on local economies and societies and also will be of global significance. Such developments will create new complementarities enhancing and stimulating productivity and diversification.
51. Despite having achieved a great deal already, the BSEC must continue to explore and innovate in order to play an even more positive role in the regional and global arena. For the Black Sea region to fully benefit from its diversity of opportunities, collective effort at all levels is needed to provide a common frame of cooperation which supports economic growth and prosperity.

52. Parliaments and governments of the BSEC countries have to exploit their possibilities at the utmost to boost economic integration in the Black Sea region with a view of consolidating the process of establishing peace, security and political stability through greater synergy between the member countries for the successful realization of common objectives of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.
53. Parliamentarians of the BSEC member states contribute to the realization of a huge potential of friendly neighborhood, unity and economic cooperation between states and the peoples in the region. They continue to promote necessary legislative changes and cohesion supporting the sustainable economic growth, regional integration and strengthening political stability.
54. There is no doubt that prevailing unstable political climate and unresolved conflicts undermine normal flow of economic activities and deprive the region from fully benefiting from the economic cooperation process. Even the countries, which are not directly involved in conflicts, suffer economic, social and political consequences of the regional instability. Solution of spectrum of regional problems is closely linked to the efforts for the establishment of a lasting peace and stability in the region by political means counteracting the logic of force leading to the political impasse.
55. Parliamentarians and governments of the BSEC member states can and must strengthen a partnership for prosperity where opportunities become the common property of the peoples in the Black Sea region. The region where disputes among or within the nations are peacefully and honorably resolved. Where cultures and nations are universally and mutually respected, where no persons' rights are denied, where families and communities are strong.
56. The objective of turning the Black Sea into the sea of peace stability and prosperity can only be achieved by mutual contribution of parliaments and governments in mobilizing public support for implementation of the joint projects, the multilateral BSEC Agreements and Resolutions as well as the PABSEC Recommendations.
57. It has to be acknowledged that within the Black Sea region and its ambit not many people are satisfied with the rate of the progress. There is a common complaint that 'people-to-people' initiatives and programmes do not reach a wide enough audience and, therefore, the undertakings of the BSEC and the PABSEC remain relatively unknown. It is the fact that the great number of the multilateral agreements was signed but few of them were realized as intended. This, unfortunately, reinforces the impression that the BSEC and PABSEC deliver to the peoples much less than they state in their political declarations which is a shortfall between expectations and delivery.
58. This reveals the need for greater involvement of national parliaments in promoting the integral role of local governments and non-governmental players in mobilizing public support. To this end, the aspiration of the Black Sea countries towards establishing peace, prosperity and stability in the region has to be tied in with a coherent strategy of partnership and coordination with due regard to the strengthening of the role of local government as an important link for bridging friendship and cooperation among the Black Sea peoples.
59. Also bearing in mind the recent changes in the responsibilities of non-state actors in public life and their increasingly important role at the national, regional, and international levels, new mechanisms, methods and efforts are to be identified to foster

participation by civil society organizations in regional activities. The civil society may serve as a valuable resource for fostering regional initiatives through contributing to greater regional consensus and solidarity in addressing common problems.

60. For civil society engagement to make a difference in the region it is important that more active role is injected for civil society in the regional integration process. It is important to promote appropriate programs oriented toward strengthening civil society and public participation mechanisms. Increased participation of civil society in the region will promote social solidarity and add value in the process of meeting the goals and objective of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.
61. With this in mind, PABSEC has to interact with the BSEC and its Related Bodies for efficient implementation of the “BSEC Economic Agenda towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership”, which represents the common programme of actions for the member states for the future.
62. In order to reach its grand goal of creating a harmonious Black Sea region, the parliaments and governments must draw the maximum support from the peoples in the member states. There is a need to build a stronger foundation of public and non-government support in the wider Black Sea region to underpin the regional identity.
63. The cooperation in the wider Black Sea region has to be adjusted to the current needs and if necessary may implement organizational transformations in order to remain more pragmatic, flexible and relevant to the global changes and challenges.