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**THE SEVENTEENTH PLENARY SESSION OF THE PABSEC GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL, TECHNOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**REPORT**

**ON**

**" BLACK SEA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION: NEW CHALLENGES"**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. Environmental protection has long been a concern of the PABSEC. Its actions in this field are carried out in the framework of *sustainable development*.
2. In December 1994 the Tirana PABSEC General Assembly adopted the Report and Recommendation 5/1994 on 'Black Sea Environmental Health', outlining the Assembly's approach on the issue.
3. In July 1996, the PABSEC along with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe organised the 'First Inter-Parliamentary Conference on the Environmental Protection of the Black Sea' in Istanbul which worked out a *Final Declaration* advocating the urgent need for international cooperation and action to save the Black Sea environment.
4. The Strategic Action Plan for the Rehabilitation and Protection of the Black Sea signed by the six Black Sea coastal states on 31 October 1996 asked the Black Sea states to encourage " ... *enhanced co-ordination between the regional bodies which contribute towards the rehabilitation and protection of the Black Sea ecosystem... [among which] ...the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC)...*".
5. The PABSEC has promoted and monitored action at the parliamentary level to ensure the continuation and strengthening of the processes initiated by governments, international organisations and regional institutions. It has become a common ground that economic development can not be pursued neglecting the cost on the environment. Pursuing sustainable development requires the introduction of environmental conservation as an equally important goal to the goals of economic efficiency and social equity. Particularly in the BSEC framework where most of the economies are in transformation, it becomes imperative to integrate environmental policy to economic development policy.
6. This Report is a new effort to stimulate coordinated action by the PABSEC, the BSEC and its Related Bodies in a common endeavour to ameliorate environmental conditions in the region and to set up priorities for future action.
7. The Rapporteur thanks the National Delegations of Armenia, Greece, Romania, Turkey, the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat, the Secretariat of the Black Sea Environmental Program, the Secretariat of the Commission of the Bucharest Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution and the European Commission for their contributions to the Report.

## II. LEGAL INSTRUMENTS IN THE BLACK SEA

8. Until recently the Black Sea has been unprotected by any common policy or regional legal regime. One of the first steps for a regional framework of environmental actions was set up by the **Summit Declaration** of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (1992) which asks the participating states to "*take appropriate steps, including by promoting joint projects, for the protection of the environment, particularly the preservation and the improvement of the environment of the Black Sea, and the conservation, exploitation and development of its bio-productive potential*". Within this framework the **BSEC Working Group on Environmental Protection** was established which has been convened five times until today.
9. The BSEC in defining environmental protection policy and action, takes into account the *Agenda 21* signed at the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the *Environmental Action Program for Central and Eastern*

*Europe*, adopted in 1993 which forms the basis for national environmental priority-setting in a number of BSEC countries too.

10. In 1992, the six coastal states signed the **Bucharest** Convention on the Protection of Black Sea against Pollution (ratified by 1994) which includes a basic framework of agreement and three specific Protocols on: i) the control of land – based sources of pollution, ii) dumping of waste, and iii) joint action in the case of accidents (such as oil spills). Of direct relevance to the Black Sea is the **Odessa** Ministerial Declaration on the Protection of the Black Sea (7 April 1993) signed by all six Black Sea coastal states.

11. The Global Environment Facility (GEF), co-managed by the World Bank and UNEP and UNDP, has supported the establishment of the **Black Sea Environmental Program** and assisted the countries in drawing up a **Strategic Action Plan for the Rehabilitation and Protection of the Black Sea** which was adopted on 31 October 1996 in Istanbul by the six coastal states which are parties to the Bucharest Convention. The Action Plan doesn't therefore, cover all the components of the environment as it especially covers the Black Sea pollution and it has to be implemented by the six coastal states. Thus, the BSEC non-coastal countries have no competence to interfere in the respective activities. The Secretariat of the Istanbul Commission responsible for the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan has recently been established. Activity Centres and Advisory Groups have been also well functioning for the implementation of the Black Sea Convention.

12. A recent development is the drafting of the **Convention for Fisheries and Conservation of Living Resources of the Black Sea** which is discussed within the relevant BSEC Working Group.

13. Governments of the BSEC states have been active on the **international** level as well. They have adhered to a number of international, legally binding Conventions over the past years, making the level of ratification of MEAs high. All Black Sea countries are now, for example, parties to the Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) and several countries have acceded to the Conventions of Ramsar, Bern, etc. (see table 1).

**Table 1. STATUS OF RATIFICATION OF SELECTED LEGAL INSTRUMENTS**

Country	Convention on Biological Diversity (1992)	Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (1971)	Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)	Convention to Combat Desertification (1994)	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES, 1973)	Convention for the Protection of the Black Sea from Pollution	Convention on the Protection of the Migratory Species (1979)	Convention on the control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous wastes and their disposal	The Barcelona Convention on the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution (1976)
Albania	R	A ('96)	R ('89)	A (2000)	N	N	N	A ('99)	A ('90)
Armenia	R	A('93)	S ('93)*	R ('97)	N	N	N	A ('99)	N
Azerbaijan	R	N	R ('93)	A ('98)	A ('98)	N	N	N	N
Bulgaria	R	A ('76)	Ac ('74)	N	A ('91)	R	A ('99)	A ('96)	N
Georgia	R	A ('97)	S ('92) *	R ('99)	A ('96)	R	A (2000)	A ('96)	N
Greece	R	R ('75)	R ('81)	R ('97)	A ('92)	N	R	A ('94)	R ('79)
Moldova	R	A ('00)	N	A ('99)	N	N	N	A ('98)	N
Romania	R	A ('91)	Ac ('90)	A ('98)	A ('94)	R	A ('98)	A ('91)	N
Russia	R	S	R ('88)	N	A ('92)	R	N	R ('95)	N
Turkey	R	A ('94)	R ('83)	R ('98)	A (99)	R	N	R ('94)	R ('81)
Ukraine	R	A ('91)	R ('88)	N	A (99)	R	A ('99)	A ('99)	N

S: Singed      R: Ratified      A: Accession      Ac: Acceptance      N: Not member  
*The symbol \* designates States for whom the Convention has not yet entered into force. The year refers to the year of deposit of ratification, acceptance or accession accordingly.*

14. The establishment of a web of **bilateral agreements** among the BSEC countries has been a positive development in the process of setting up a legal and policy framework of co-operation. To mention but a few examples: Azerbaijan has concluded an 'Agreement on cooperation in the field of ecology and environmental protection' with Turkey. Bulgaria has ratified (1992) the *Convention on environmental cooperation* with Romania, and the *Convention on utilisation of the waters of the rivers crossing Greece*. Moldova has also reached environmental agreements with Ukraine and Romania. In 1999 the agreement between Armenia and Georgia on *Cooperation in the Sphere of Protection of Environment and Natural Resources* was ratified by Armenia while in February 2000, Turkey signed a *Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Protection* with Greece.

15. Another factor heavily weighting on the formulation of the modern legal framework of environmental protection is the **European acquis** which some of the BSEC countries (Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey) have to integrate into their regulations while others i.e. Greece are already bound by it. The European Union has over 200 legal acts, covering almost all environmental issues which provide a framework for initiatives at both regional, national and European level.

### III. THE BLACK SEA ENVIRONMENT

#### a) An Overview

16. All environmental assessment reports indicate that the ongoing degradation of the Black Sea ecosystems and the unsustainable use of natural resources poses a major threat for the overall development of the region. Notwithstanding the great diversity of the eleven members of the BSEC in terms of natural conditions and socio-economic characteristics, all countries are facing similar ecological problems related to **pollution control** (air, water and soil), **nature conservation and biodiversity**.

17. Among all common environmental problems of the eleven states, the **pollution of the Black Sea itself and its coast**, is of primary concern for the BSEC. The problem stretches far beyond the frontiers of the Black Sea itself as heavy pollution is caused due to the alarming situation of the Danube and other rivers (Dnieper, Dniester and Don) which bring down nutrients, oil, heavy metals etc or of the pollution of the Mediterranean Sea. Approximately one third of Europe drains into the Black Sea. Six coastal countries border the Black Sea, a total of 11 countries in the basin have a role in controlling aquatic and airborne pollution. At the same time, increasing fear for the environmental health of the region is caused by the exploitation of energy resources. Falling industrial activity since the early 1990s has resulted in less pollution of coastal waters but the construction of oil terminals and the expected increase of economic activities as well as of traffic to the Black Sea ports through the Bosphorus Straits are likely to increase pollution again. The sources of pollution vary: rivers, direct discharges of industrial and domestic effluent, waste disposal and dumping, pollution arising from normal operations of and accidents by ships, atmospherically transported contaminants. Eutrophication and overfishing, together with increased numbers of a species of jellyfish accidentally introduced in the 1980s, have led to a drastic decline in fish catches. Black Sea coastal waters remain heavily impacted by **sewage**, a situation that warrants urgent action. Some countries (e.g. Romania) are investing in new wastewater treatment facilities but that treatment is absent or deficient in most places in the Black Sea. **Oil pollution** can be seen around river mouths, industrial installation and ports. The Black Sea has a significant high concentration of human produced **radionuclides** mainly due to the Chernobyl accident in 1986.

18. The environment of the Black Sea and of the surrounding areas has deteriorated dramatically in terms of its biodiversity, habitats, fisheries, resources, aesthetic and recreational value of water quality. The Black Sea Environmental Program has identified 50 Hot Spots in the Black Sea Region which call for immediate action (table 2).

<b>Table 2. 50 HOT SPOTS IN THE BLACK SEA</b>	
<i>Source: Black Sea Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis, BSEP, Istanbul, 1997</i>	
<b>Country</b>	<b>Name</b>
Bulgaria	Rosenets, Varna, Burgaz, Asparuhopvo, Balchik, Sodi, Tsavaro, Neftochim, Sozopol
Georgia	Kutaisi, Batumi, Chiaruta, Poti, Zestafoni, Tskhaltobo, Zugdidi
Romania	Fertilchim, Petromedia, Costanta North, Eforie South, Mangalia, Constanta South
Russia	Rostov-on-Don, Taganrag, Sheskharis, Azov, Tuapse, Anapa, Gelendzhik, Dzhoubga
Turkey	KBI Samsun, TUGSAS Samsun, Trabzon, KBI Murgul, Samsun, Zonguldak, Giresun, Ordu, Bafra, Ereqli
Ukraine	Pivdenni, Pivnichni, Balaklava, Yevpatoriya, Sevastopol, Yalta, Gurzyf, Kramish Burunsky, Illichevsk, Krasnoperekopsk

19. In terms of the **terrestrial ecosystem**, all national reports emphasise that a danger emerges concerning forest resources due to both climatic and socio-economic factors. Due to overexploitation of fuel from forests there have been high rates of deforestation in Albania while in Georgia rates reach 30%. Greece and Turkey on the other hand, recognise that forest-fires and overgrazing are the two main problems of deforestation.

20. The main problem of **water resources** is pollution and secondly constraints concerning quantities. One of the most serious forms of river pollution is high concentrations of nutrients, causing eutrophication in the lakes and seas onto which they discharge. Many rivers and lakes which often constitute the main sources of drinking water contain excessive toxic substances (e.g. Dniester). In Romania 15% of the total length of rivers are officially classified as “degraded” while the region’s record heavily aggravated by a serious cyanide spill into the Danube in January 2000. Pollution of small rivers (e.g in Moldova) is also extensive while chemical pollution has been met in freshwater reservoir storage (e.g. Russian Federation). The Lake Sevan in Armenia which is a main drinking water source for the country and the whole South Caucasus region is under threat due to the decrease of the water together with increased external pollution loads.

21. All BSEC countries pay particular attention to the issue of biodiversity and nature conservation particularly as far as the **wetlands, their habitants and species** is concerned. Most remaining inland as well as coastal wetlands including deltas suffer particularly heavy pressure from human activities. The **erosion** of the Black Sea shore which is subjected to continue degrading has a sever impact upon the territorial integrity of certain states. Over the last three decades, only in the area between the Delta and Cape Midia, some 2500 hectares of Romanian territory were lost.

#### **b) Achievements and Lessons**

22. Notwithstanding that BSEC countries are bound together by a shared commitment on peace, stability and prosperity in the region, they also exhibit a wide diversity of physical, economic, social, cultural and environmental conditions that need to be taken into account when evaluating countries’ environmental performance. To mention but a few differences: *environmental institutions* with various degrees of decentralisation concerning environmental policy definition and implementation, *the endowment in natural resources* (water, land, energy, forest, agricultural and fish resources), *the*

*density of the pressures* from economic activities and population and finally in terms of *economic conditions*

23. Black Sea environmental protection is a complex endeavour. There are many actors involved: the BSEC and the Danube countries, regional organisations, decision makers (e.g. international and bi-lateral donors, and international financing institutions) and various other interested parties (e.g. NGOs). In the BSEC region, often, environmental problems come together with economic problems. Implementation of policy reforms meets problems largely due to socio-economic decline, budgetary shortages, shortages on trained staff in conjunction with lack of awareness. Thus, among the main factors influencing the interface of environment and development are issues related to the transition period, institutional deficiencies, previous development policies, lack of policy implementation, lack of necessary financial resources to implement policies and low public awareness.

24. Most of the common efforts on environmental protection until today have been directed to the recovery of the Black Sea due to its alarming situation. It is a great challenge for evaluators to assess progress and to evaluate processes leading to successful implementation of environmental projects and activities due to the difficulties on finding reliable data. Environmental Assessments highlight the insufficiency of current programs for pollution monitoring in the region. The lack of comparable information, particularly data on inputs of contaminants from rivers makes it difficult to measure future trends and assess compliance with international commitments (e.g. the Strategic Action Plan).

25. Among the positive developments is the establishment, last year, of the Secretariat of the Commission of the Bucharest Convention that gives impetus for the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan and further coordinated actions. Valuable work for the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan is done by the Advisory Groups that have been functioning in Varna, Odesa, Krasnodar, Istanbul, Batumi and Costanta. Cooperation between the BSEP and the Danube Environmental Programme has led to practical results in effective water management and the implementation of parallel projects funded by the GEF, UNDP, EU, World Bank. The BSEP has placed major emphasis on capacity building, focusing on improving skills for assessing and managing natural resources and the environment as well as in re-equipping the pollution monitoring network and mobilising experts.

26. The Black Sea Data System (developed with support from the Netherlands) will facilitate availability of information and analysis to scientists, managers and national authorities. Another important development is the project of the establishment of the Caucasus Regional Ecological Centre by Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and the EU.

27. **Many programs** are currently carried out in the region lacking however clear coordination. The following UN-related projects and programs have been highlighted: UNDP is implementing the Danube and the Black Sea Pilot Phase GEF projects (Global Environmental Facility) as well as the Dnieper GEF project. The World Bank is implementing the Danube Delta Biodiversity projects. The Netherlands is contributing to a Sea of Azov project and the World Bank is working on the Lower Don as part of the environmental load to the Russian Federation. In addition, there are several biodiversity projects in the Region (GEF UNEP and/or World Bank) as well as World Bank and EBRD pre-investment studies. Other cooperation is also significant to the environmental improvement in the region, e.g. a number of national and regional EU PHARE and TACIS projects and programs, as well as those between individual BSEC countries and donor governments.

28. **Financing** of environmental projects remains a problem while environmental protection seems to lose importance in public policy as it is demonstrated from the public expenses on the sector. Environmental Funds at national level, where they are established, provide funding but public expenditures remain low (Turkey's environmental investment amounted in 1997 to around USD 1 billion or 0.5% of its GDP, in Russia less than 1% of the Federal Budget was directly allocated to environmental purposes in 1994 and 1995).

29. As far as international Conventions are concerned, the level of ratification is high. Concerning national **environmental legislation** and regulations, although much progress has been made, there is still ground for improvement. All BSEC countries today, have established a framework of policies and laws as well as general environmental goals which are laid down in their constitutions and general environmental acts (e.g., Bulgaria, Turkey, the Russian Federation, Ukraine). Most countries since 1991 have adopted several environmental laws (on water, forest, underground resources, atmosphere, flora etc.) as well as National Environmental Action Plans. In Albania, the law for environmental protection was adopted in 1991 being followed by laws on forest (1992), fishing (1995), water resources (1996) etc. In Armenia, the law on the 'Principles of Natural Protection legislation' was adopted in 1991 and in Azerbaijan, the law on 'Environmental Protection and Utilisation of Natural Resources' was adopted in 1992. In Ukraine, the main principles of the state environmental policy have been ensured by the corresponding articles of the Constitution of Ukraine and by a series of laws adopted after 1991 and presented in the document "Main aspects of the national policy on environmental protection, utilisation of natural resources, and guarantee of environmental safety" (1998). The Concept of the Transition to Sustainable Development has been also approved by several BSEC countries (e.g. in 1996 by the Russian Federation, in 1998 by Ukraine). In the case of Greece, environmental policy has been driven by EU legislation and six-year action programs are the centrepieces of environmental progress. The 1983 Environmental Law defines the framework of environmental management and environmental legislation in Turkey. The last legislative activities based on the environmental law date back to 1997. Turkey as well as Bulgaria and Romania have been restructuring their legislative framework in line with the European *acquis* but according to *the 2000 Progress Report of the European Commission*, deficiencies persist in several sectors (e.g. waste management is one of the most problematic areas).

30. Environmental law has yet not had a noticeable positive impact on nature in general and the marine environment of the Black Sea in particular. Many new laws have been drafted or adopted but their impact has proven inadequate. For all BSEC countries with no exception, lack of enforcement has been the Achilles' heel of policy implementation, weakening the effectiveness of environmental regulations. For example in the cases of *biodiversity* and on *water quality* there is legislation but it has not been adequately implemented. However, on *Integrated Coastal Management*, legislation is not sufficient and it is urgently needed. What is stressed in all reports, is the weak **administrative** capacity in the performance of the state policies and lack of structures for enforcement monitoring along with lack of qualified staff.

31. Although efforts have been made to raise **public awareness** of environmental issues, (i.e. an environmental NGOs network has been established) lack of familiarity with the concept of sustainable development still constitutes a handicap for policy implementation.

**Table 3. TRANSBOUNDARY PROBLEMS OF THE BLACK SEA**

Source: *Black Sea Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis*, GEF, BSEP-PCU, Istanbul, 1997

<b>Main Causes</b>	<b>Problems</b>	<b>Areas of Action</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Poor legal framework at national/regional level</li> <li>2. Inadequate implementation of available regulatory instruments</li> <li>3. Inadequate planning</li> <li>4. Insufficient public involvement</li> <li>5. Inadequate financial mechanisms</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decline in Commercial Fishing</li> <li>- Loss of habitats, wetlands, shelf areas</li> <li>- Loss of endangered species</li> <li>- Replacement of indigenous species with exotic ones</li> <li>- Degradation of the landscape</li> <li>- Inadequate protection from maritime accidents</li> <li>- Unsanitary conditions in beaches and waters</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduction of Pollution</li> <li>2. Living Resources Management</li> <li>3. Sustainable human development</li> </ol>

32. The **BSEC** has taken concrete steps in the field of environment. The Working Group on Environmental Protection has identified priority areas and basic principles of cooperation while it has been the main forum of exchange of information and policy experience among the BSEC countries. In the field of fisheries the conclusion of the *Convention for Fisheries and Conservation of Living Resources of the Black Sea* will be a significant step forward. The BSEC and the UNEP have recently reached an 'Agreement on cooperation' (endorsed by the BSEC Council on 20 October 2000) which represents a new effort to coordinate their activities to prevent further degradation and restore the integrity of the environment of the Black Sea region. In the same spirit, the *BSEC Economic Agenda for the Future* refers particularly to environmental protection as a field of concerted action among the BSEC countries. The established contacts between the BSEC and the World Meteorological Organisation aimed at promoting the Black Sea Hydrological Cycle Observing System (Black Sea HYCOS) should also be mentioned. The "*Agreement among the Governments of the Participating States of the BSEC on collaboration in Emergency Assistance and Emergency Response to natural and man-made disasters*" (signed in 1998) provides a solid ground for further initiatives to be focused especially on environmental issues.

33. At the inter-parliamentary level, efforts continue with a view to foster dialogue and to bring attention on the alarming situation of the environment. In this spirit, the most significant recent development is the endorsement of the final Declaration of the 6<sup>th</sup> Inter-parliamentary Conference on the Mediterranean and Black Sea Basins, on 19-21 October 2000 within the framework of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

#### **IV. POLICY ACTIONS AND PRIORITY GOALS**

34. The challenge which the region faces is to secure a healthy, sustainable environment at a time when economic recovery and further development are also being pursued. Therefore the challenges to be met by the BSEC countries in the process of converging with international and European environmental standards are:

- **the legislative challenge:** incorporation of the environmental regulations requires a comprehensive analysis of the laws of the BSEC countries in order to enable priorities to be laid down. Since the process of implementation of each law is time-consuming and costly, priorities and realistic targets are required. Harmonisation of regulations and standards should be of immediate concern.
- **the institutional challenge:** strengthening of the administrative structures, increase of efficiency and coordination of the institutions responsible for the management of environmental policy and the implementation of legislation.

- **the financial challenge:** elaboration of financing strategies and identification of immediate priorities (as an indication of the existing needs, estimates –for the accession countries- put the total investment costs of meeting the environmental *acquis* at ECU 100-200 billion)”.

35. While addressing legal, institutional and financial priorities the BSEC countries are also asked to coordinate their actions towards achieving **sectoral integration** of environmental dimension and raising **public awareness** through the activation of NGOs, local and regional authorities and the enhancement of environmental education and training. Integration of environmental concerns in the most polluting sectors: a) *industry*, b) *transport*, c) *energy*, d) *agriculture* and e) *tourism* in order to be complete has to be accompanied by emphasis on new **instruments**, especially market-oriented ones (e.g. fiscal incentives). Environmental policies are not important only for social and health reasons but they are necessary to boost international trade. International Financial Institutions require adherence to environmental standards before funding projects.

36. **Regional cooperation** is a necessity as environmental problems are of mainly transboundary nature. As we already stressed, there is a number of actors involved in environmental protection. Thus, a *division of labour* is important for the best result to be achieved. The UN/BSEP and the Commission of the Bucharest Convention deals with sea pollution and coast related issues. The BSEC has more capacity in dealing with issues related to environmental management while addressing issues that have not been addressed adequately at a regional level until today, such as *forest protection*, *protection of inland waters* and environmental *risk management*. The role of the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank is important in terms of integrating environmental concerns into the assessment procedures of Bank financed operations and as an intermediary for the provision of clean technologies in a cost-effective and economically feasible manner. For introducing environmental friendly facilities and production processes, collaboration with the private sector should also be pursued and the BSEC Business Council is well placed to assist on that. The BSEC in collaboration with the ICBSS can play an important role in the exchange of scientific research and experience. The Parliamentary Assembly and the National Parliaments on the other hand, have an indispensable role to play not only on the legislative process but in reminding to the governments of their environmental obligations and in controlling implementation of policies and programs.

37. In terms of *specific sectors* there is no doubt that all sectors (air, water and soil pollution, waste management, nuclear safety etc) require equal attention. However, the BSEC and its Related Bodies should identify a starting point (e.g in the field of conservation of biodiversity) and direct efforts on implementing relevant policies. In the same framework, the PABSEC and BSEC (WG on Environmental Protection) could assist the BSEC countries to sign bilateral and multilateral agreements for the implementation of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention, 1991). Specific fields of enhanced cooperation within the BSEC framework, as concluded among others from the contributions of the PABSEC National Delegations, are: coastal management, maritime protection, protection of inland waters, erosion of landscape and nuclear safety. In view of the expected development of the agriculture sector in the region and the great ecological consequences of intensified farming, developing strategies of sustainable agriculture becomes a priority concern. Finally, particular interest has been expressed by some of the Black Sea countries, on applying new satellite systems of monitoring for the prevention of maritime accidents.

38. As far as the *Strategic Action Plan - SAP* (1996) is concerned, the PABSEC has already supported its implementation. The BSEC and its Related Bodies could cooperate with the Commission of the Bucharest Convention and the UN Environmental Program in implementing the SAP and the UNEP programs respectively. Proposals for the enhancement of environmental cooperation include the accession of the BSEC non Black Sea coastal states (or of the BSEC Organisation or of the European Commission) into the Bucharest Convention.

39. Many of the projects are huge, requiring far excess of the means of the countries or of the regional -environmental- institutions. Therefore, combinations of investment projects from donors, international financial institutions as well as international technical assistance should be sought. Co-operation among the states in the region is essential to setting up this framework.

40. A number of BSEC countries are seeking EU membership and environmental issues are one of the main and complex issues to be tackled. Future accession of a number of BSEC countries to the European Union and the integration of the *acquis* is an environmental challenge of a great scale. The Commission for that purpose, has drawn up a special strategy within the Agenda 2000. The applicant countries must thus, implement national strategies which should include priority areas of action, key objectives to be attained by the date of accession and timetables for the subsequent achievement of compliance. In this view, the BSEC and its Parliamentary Assembly could assist on helping its members to meet their international environmental responsibilities.

## **V. CONCLUSIONS**

41. In the search of a Black Sea identity, ecology has a lot to contribute as it unites people on the basis of common interests and offers a basis for creating participation in a unifying purpose. *Ecology could be an important element of the Black Sea identity.*

42. Which are the new policy challenges that the BSEC countries are facing vis-à-vis Black Sea environmental protection? The constant interest of the international community on the Black Sea ecosystems notwithstanding, environmental problems continue to exist and to pose a serious threat for sustainable development in the region. Setting up an enabling legal framework and harmonising environmental standards where this is deemed appropriate, is an urgent task. At the same time, administrative and financial barriers need to be addressed. However, what becomes increasingly urgent is *implementation* of existing environmental regulations and projects through locally, nationally and regionally coordinated actions. Environmental problems as well as legislative deficiencies and priorities have been identified through the development of National Environmental Action Programs (NEAPs) and through the work done by regional and international actors (e.g the Black Sea Environmental Program). Now the most urgent task is to move on to pursuing solutions by implementing these programs and regulations by setting *priorities* and realistic timetables.

43. As environmental issues are increasingly related not only to economic development but also to social and security issues it becomes obvious that environmental protection is crucial for the stability and prosperity of the peoples of the BSEC states. The negative effects on human health and on economic activities in the region (e.g. tourism, fishing) due to environmental degradation, are calling for coordinated action. In that endeavour, the region is privileged with a number of assets. First, the continuing commitment of the governments and parliaments in the region to pursue policies of sustainable development, second the existence of regional organisations, namely the BSEC and its Related Bodies that could speed up co-ordinated action.