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FORTY FIFTH PLENARY SESSION OF THE PABSEC GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
CULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

**REPORT\***

**“The Role of Sport in Promoting Growth, Employment  
and Social Cohesion in the BSEC Region”**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. Nowadays there is no doubt that sport can play a fundamental role all over the world in promoting social cohesion, stimulating economic growth and improving the employment issues. The practice of sport plays a significant role as a promoter of social integration and economic development in different geographical, cultural and political contexts. Sport is a powerful tool for strengthening social ties and networks and promoting ideals of peace, fraternity, solidarity, non-violence, tolerance and justice.

2. The Parliamentary Assembly of BSEC introduced the issue of cooperation in the field of sports in the BSEC region as early as 1997. Recommendation 24/1997 on “*Youth Cooperation in the Black sea Region*”, recommends that the Parliaments and Governments of the PABSEC Member Countries “encourage cooperation in the field of sports, in particular, within the framework of the future Black Sea Sports Games”.

3. In the *Summit Declaration on the occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Organization*, adopted in Istanbul in June 2012, Heads of State and Government of the BSEC Member States underlined “the investment in education of Youth as an essential ingredient for prosperity of our societies in the future”, and taking into consideration that “cooperation in the spheres of culture, tourism and Youth policy creates better understanding among our peoples...” expressed their support to member countries initiatives “to organize international cultural and sports events and fairs in their countries that will pave the way for further rapprochement and cultural exchange among the BSEC Member States.”

4. The issue of youth and sports was introduced in the BSEC agenda by the Bulgarian Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC in January 2014 as part of its priorities. The current Moldovan Chairmanship-in-Office has maintained the issue as a priority for cooperation within BSEC.

5. With the aim to support the ongoing discussion in the field of youth and sports and contribute to the harmonization of agendas of BSEC and PABSEC, the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee decided to take up the subject of “The Role of Sport in Promoting Growth, Employment and Social Cohesion in the BSEC Region” as the main agenda item of its 44<sup>th</sup> Meeting. Contributions to the Report were received from the national delegations of Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania and Turkey. Reference material was also obtained from the official websites of UN entities, the EU and relevant international organizations such as the Council of Europe.

## **II. SPORT AND ITS CONNECTION TO GROWTH, EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL COHESION**

6. Sport has historically played an important role in all societies, be it in the form of competitive sport, physical activity or play. Sport has been increasingly recognized and used as a low-cost and high-impact tool in humanitarian, development and peace-building efforts, first and foremost by the UN system but also by non-governmental organizations, governments, development agencies, sports federations, armed forces and the media.

7. Sport can no longer be considered a luxury within any society but is rather an important investment in the present and future, particularly in developing countries.

8. In a development context, the definition of sport usually includes a broad and inclusive spectrum of activities suitable to people of all ages and abilities, with an emphasis on the positive values of sport. In 2003, the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace defined sport, for the purposes of development, as “all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction, such as play, recreation, organized or competitive sport, and indigenous sports and games.”

9. The right of access to and participation in sport and play has long been recognized in a number of international conventions. In 1978, UNESCO described sport and physical education as a “fundamental right for all”.

10. Sport holds an important place in the lives of many people and plays a strong societal role with a powerful potential for social inclusion in and through sport, meaning that participation in sport or in physical activity in many different ways contributes to inclusion into society; whereby inclusion in sport involves a combination of ‘sport for all’, equal access to sport, equal opportunities in sport, and varied demand-oriented sporting opportunities and sport facilities, and whereby social inclusion through sport involves inclusive participation in society, community development and strengthened social cohesion.

11. Through its role in formal and informal education sports enhances human capital. By engaging in sports activities, young people acquire specific personal and professional skills and competencies. These include acquiring learning skills, competencies in the social and public fields, leadership skills, abilities to work in a team, discipline, creativity and entrepreneurship. Sport is also a source for professional knowledge and skills in the fields of marketing, management, public safety and security.

12. Sport contributes significantly to the economic and social cohesion and for the building of better integrated societies. Sport has to be accessible for everyone. Therefore, the specific needs and the situation of the less represented groups have to be taken into consideration and attention has to be paid to the special role of sports in the life of boys and girls, the disabled and the socially and economically disadvantaged people.

13. As a fundamental pillar of civil society, sport is one of the most accessible and easily understood channels for transmitting core values into everyday life, since is the single most popular form of non-formal activity outside school or work in Europe. The utilization of social connections acquired through sport can result in a variety of acts such as finding jobs, acquiring access to power or increasing the quality of life. For socially disadvantaged groups, it can result in enhanced self-confidence and social empowerment.

14. Sport has a strong potential to contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and new jobs through its positive effects on social inclusion, education and training, and public health. It helps limit the rise in social security and health expenditure by improving the health and productivity of the population and by ensuring a higher quality of life through old age. Voluntary activity in sport can contribute to employability, social inclusion as well as higher civic participation, especially among young people.

15. The sports movement can make an important contribution to issues of public interest such as social inclusion. In this context, professional athletes and amateur sport persons, as well as sport clubs, are role models for society, especially for young people, and other sport organisations and civil society organisations dealing with sport also contribute to social inclusion in and through sport.

16. Notwithstanding the above-mentioned positive effects of sport, it is to be underlined that sport does not automatically lead to social capital, social inclusion, social integration and social cohesion. History has taught us that sport can be a field where differences, or even social exclusion and social discrimination are produced or reinforced, particularly with respect to gender, social class, race/ethnicity, nationality or physical ability. This is a fact that should be considered during the development, implementation and evaluation of relevant policies and programs.

### **III. INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK AND EXPERIENCE**

#### **United Nations**

17. The UN system draws on the unique convening power of sport as a cross-cutting tool for:

Fundraising, advocacy, mobilization and raising public awareness: in particular by appointing celebrity athletes as ‘Ambassadors’ or ‘Spokespersons’ and leveraging the potential of sports events as outreach platforms. The mobilizing power of sport is often used as a “door-opener” to convey crucial messages about HIV/AIDS, child’s rights, the environment, education, etc.

Development and peace promotion: in grassroots project sport is used in an extremely wide range of situations – whether as an integrated tool in short-term emergency humanitarian aid activities, or in long-term development cooperation projects, on a local, regional or global scale.

18. UNESCO is the United Nations’ lead agency for Physical Education and Sport. It provides assistance and guidance services for governments, NGOs, and experts to debate the evolving challenges of physical education and sport. The organization also assists and advises Member States wishing to elaborate or strengthen their training system in physical education. Furthermore, it offers its expertise in the design and implementation of development programmes in the domain of sport and provides guidance, advisory services and assessments in related areas such as culture and social development. UNESCO’s Sport Programme focuses on the following themes: Sport for Peace and Development, Quality Physical Education, Traditional Sports and Games, Women and Sport, Anti-Doping.

19. A number of UN conventions have recognized the right of access to and participation in sport and play:

- Right to physical education and sport as a fundamental right for all:  
UNESCO’s International Charter of Physical Education and Sport (1978)

- Right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health:  
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)

- Right for children to engage in play and recreational activities:  
Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- Women's right to participate in recreational activities and sports:  
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)
- Right of persons with disabilities to participate in sport on an equal basis with others:  
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008)
- Right to be free from racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance:  
International Convention Against Apartheid in Sport (1985)
- Doping Free Sport:  
International Convention Against Doping in Sport (2005)

### **Council of Europe**

20. Sports activities throughout Europe are supported and guided by the adoption of a hundred or more Council of Europe texts (recommendations, declarations, resolutions and conventions). States are interested not only in the development of sport, but also in sport's potential influence on other areas of official action such as prevention of discrimination, promotion of health, and integration.

21. Through the years, the Council of Europe has built up significant competence in specialized areas concerning quality assurance in sport, thanks to the agreements adopted at the political level, not only in Europe but worldwide.

22. The following strategic documents of the Council of Europe have influenced sports activities at the European level formed a worldwide reference for the enlightened commitment of public authorities to healthy sport:

European Convention on Spectator Violence (1985)

Anti-Doping Convention (1989)

European Sport Charter (1992)

Code of Sports Ethics (1992)

23. The Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) is a body set up within the Council of Europe in 2007, open to the member states of the Council of Europe, sports NGOs and non-member states of the Council of Europe.

24. The aim of EPAS is to promote the development of sport in modern society, while emphasizing its positive values. It develops policies and standards, monitors them and helps with capacity building and the exchange of good practices. Awareness-raising and co-operation activities have been carried out on the promotion of diversity in and through sport, focusing successively on different groups (ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, women, children, etc.).

25. In 2014, the EPAS program of activities included the finalizing of the International Convention to Combat the Manipulation of Sports Competitions, involving national authorities and their sectors responsible for sports, law enforcement and betting regulation.

26. Thirty-six countries are currently EPAS members, out of which the following BSEC Member States: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Russia and Serbia.

## **European Union**

27. Sport has a significant and growing impact on Europe's economy and society. As it is a labour-intensive industry, forecast growth is likely to lead to additional employment, contributing to the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy.

### Erasmus+

28. Erasmus+ is the EU programme in the fields of education, training, youth and sport for the period 2014-2020. Education, training, youth and sport can make a major contribution to help tackle socio-economic changes, the key challenges that Europe will be facing until the end of the decade and to support the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy for growth, jobs, social equity and inclusion.

29. Erasmus + provides grants for a wide range of actions and activities in the fields of education, training, youth and sport. The programme gives opportunities to students, trainees, staff and volunteers to spend a period abroad to increase their skills and employability. It supports organizations to work in transnational partnership and to share innovative practices in the fields of education, training and youth. The new **Sport** action will support grassroots projects and cross-border challenges such as combating match-fixing, doping, violence and racism.

30. Erasmus+ also supports activities aiming at developing the European dimension in sport, by promoting cooperation between bodies responsible for sports. The programme promotes the creation and development of European networks, providing opportunities for cooperation among stakeholders and the exchange and transfer of knowledge and know-how in different areas relating to sport and physical activity. This reinforced cooperation will notably have positive effects in developing the potential of Europe's human capital by helping reduce the social and economic costs of physical inactivity.

31. All BSEC Member States can take part in Erasmus+: Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and Turkey as Programme Countries and Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine as Partner Countries.

### EU Work Plan for Sport

32. The Council and the representatives of the governments of the member states adopted a resolution on an EU Work Plan for Sport (2014-2017), which aims to further strengthen cooperation in the field of sport between the member states and the Commission.

33. The resolution underlines the need for the EU to work closely with the sport movement and relevant competent organizations at national, European and international levels, such as the Council of Europe and the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), in particular through the structured dialogue.

34. It also acknowledges the important contribution of sport to the overall goals of the Europe 2020 strategy, given the sector's strong potential to contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and new jobs and considering its positive effects on social inclusion, education and training, as well as on public health and active ageing. The plan sets out the following priority areas:

- integrity of sport, including anti-doping, the fight against match-fixing, protection of minors, good governance and gender equality;
- economic dimension of sport, addressing in particular sustainable financing of sport, the legacy of major sport events, economic benefits of sport and innovation;
- sport and society, covering health-enhancing physical activities (HEPA), volunteering and employment in sport, as well as education and training in sport.

#### **IV. PROMOTION OF SPORT IN THE BSEC MEMBER STATES**

35. Although a comprehensive study on sport participation in the BSEC region does not exist, research from several member states shows that the majority of young people are not involved in any kind of sport activity. Even though promotion of healthy lifestyle is one of the priorities of the National Youth Policies across the region there is quite much to be done also in practice. Number of different NGOs are also providing young people with range of different programs on healthy lifestyle, however most of them have pure informative nature and often do not succeed in bringing a desired culture change among youth, also due to lack of facilities (especially in rural areas). Getting involved in physical activities is also quite costly which means not too many young people are able to afford it. Young people both in urban and rural areas spend most of their free time socializing, watching television or using the Internet. By comparison, a relatively small number of young people spend their free time engaged in sports, reading, obtaining additional training, or studying.

36. The BSEC Member States have been formulating their sport policies in the framework of global and international standards mentioned in the previous chapter of this report. Some countries have developed special policies on sport, like for example **Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova and Serbia**.

37. In **Azerbaijan**, the Law on “Physical Education and Sports” establishes the legal framework in the sports and implies the relevant State Policy. It also contains clearly defined rights and obligations of the state in the sphere of development of the sport. For the first time in the new draft law on sport and physical education all the duties and rights of local governments were clearly defined. The respective programs like the “National Strategy” and the “State Program” for further increase and progress of sport in daily life of the citizens have been elaborated.

38. For the purpose of development of sport, the government in addition to local tournaments organizes a big number of international tournaments in Azerbaijan. There were more than 55 international tournaments, European and World Championships in various disciplines during 2014 in Azerbaijan. For the first time in the history of Europe the first European Games will be held in Baku in 2015. In this context, a large number of sports facilities has been constructed –and is still continuing– in Azerbaijan over the last years, among which 41

Olympic complexes throughout the country. In the process of the construction and further maintenance of these facilities, the Azerbaijani specialists were assisted by experts from various countries, including also those of the BSEC region.

39. In **Bulgaria**, the National Strategy on the Development of Physical Education and Sports as well as the National Youth Strategy aim at promoting actions for the development of skills for labour activities through sports, supporting volunteer organizations and sports clubs, as well as sports activities and events at mass and professional levels. Apart from the above mentioned policies, most of Bulgaria's strategic documents contain policies that are aimed at:

- providing a mechanism to link the education sector with the employment sector through the creation of adequate opportunities for specialized qualification and training of those employed in the sports sector (Strategy for Life-long Learning);
- taking measures for social inclusion of disabled persons, children and other vulnerable groups through removing the architectural obstacles to sports venues and facilities, securing access to cultural institutions through repair and reconstruction works on the buildings and development of measures for fostering the participation of representatives of the vulnerable groups in sports and cultural events (National Strategy for Reducing Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion);
- developing the potential for the creation of new jobs in the sports sector in the construction, reconstruction, renovation and/or equipping of the sports infrastructure (Employment Strategy 2013-2020);
- setting up mechanisms for the funding of sports in view of promoting social inclusion and youth employment, from the structural funds through Operational Programme "Regions in Growth", Operational Programme "Human Resources", Operational Programme "Science and Education for Intelligent Growth" as well as directly from the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund.

40. In 2013, **Georgia** adopted the National Sport Policy, dealing with the following main issues:

- sports infrastructure;
- sports education and science, including medicine;
- improving of legislation database, with the aim to harmonize it with the European legislation.

41. Ensuing from the National Sport Policy Document, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia has worked out the "Business Plan of Sports Infrastructure Development for 2015-2020", where the terms of construction, budget and location of specific sports facilities are defined. State support of sport has been intensified since 2013, with the aim to enhance the country's economic development. In terms of employment, construction of sports facilities is currently occupying more than 5000 individuals.

42. **Moldova** has developed the 2015-2020 Strategy for the development of physical culture and sports, the main goals of which are: to promote among the population a healthy lifestyle and to instil motivational factors for the regular practice of physical exercises; to raise the competitiveness of Moldovan sports; to make use of sport's potential to contribute

significantly to the achievement of general objectives by increasing the employment capacity and mobility through measures that promote social inclusion through sport, education and training.

43. Moldova has been developing its sport policy in the framework of the Association Agreement with the European Union (signed and ratified in autumn 2014). The Government approved the 2014-2016 National Action Plan for the implementation of the Association Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union, which touches upon also the sector of sports, aiming at the transition to a new high quality development level. In accordance with chapter 23, article 126 of the Association Agreement “The Parties shall promote cooperation in the field of sport and physical activity through the exchange of information and good practices in order to promote a healthy lifestyle, the social and educational values of sport and good governance in sport within the societies of the EU and the Republic of Moldova.”

44. The **Serbian National Strategy for 2009-2013** is based on the premise that the country represents itself internationally, affirms its cultural legacy and strengthens national cohesion through sport (Ministry of Youth and Sport, Serbia 2008). Further on, the importance of physical education is stressed, and the evident lack of sports infrastructure is mentioned. Based on this premise, priority actions are planned and the financial support is distributed accordingly. Explicit emphasis is given to national recognition, which could challenge ideals of social cohesion and ethnic dialogue: when sport is regarded in narrow terms, projects that use sport as a tool for democratic development or cultural and ethnic pluralism, and not for the competitive purpose of representing nation internationally, are not likely to be supported systematically from the sport budget.

45. In other Member States, policies on sport are part of National Youth Policies. This is for example the case with **Romania** and **Ukraine**.

46. The legal framework for a youth policy in **Romania** was created by the 2006 Youth Law. The Government of Romania adopted the National Strategy in the field of youth policy, which envisages specific measures and objectives in the field of sport such as increasing the number of young people exercising and practicing sports in mass competitions, raising awareness on a quality life style, fighting obesity, ensuring the access to sport facilities, etc. Romania is aware of the fact that sports offers to young people many advantages, that sport is an invaluable tool for promoting education in a multicultural framework, supporting disadvantaged groups, preventing social exclusion and combating all forms of discrimination and racism. Recently the Romanian government took concrete measures to increase the time foreseen in the curriculum for physical activity. In this direction, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Education introduced five hours of sports in preparatory schools and other five hours in primary school. Recently a program "A chance through sport" was created, aiming to create sports facilities for underprivileged and institutionalized children. Another measure implemented by the Ministry of Youth and Sports was the launching of "Pierre de Coubertin" program which supports the implementation of the right to sport for all children and juniors.

47. In **Ukraine**, the Strategy for the state youth policy development for the period up to 2020 defines the principles, aim and tasks directed at promoting further development of proper organizational, socio-economic, political and legislative conditions for social formation and development of young people. Among the priorities of the state youth policy is the formation

of a healthy lifestyle among young people through: motivation to lead a healthy lifestyle; development of physical culture and sport; organizing all-Ukrainian, cross-regional and regional sport competitions and tournaments; and implementation of programs directed at engaging young people in physical culture and sport activities.

48. Through the General Directorate of Sports, **Turkey** has been developing projects, training and campaigns with the theme "youth and sports" with a focus on its Black Sea coastal regions. Such initiatives include the creation of:

- athlete training centers for children, allowing them to develop skills of a superior athlete without hindering their formal education. During the last five educational years, a total of 1,474 student athletes were trained, with 321 student athletes currently attending the centers;
- Provincial Sports Centers and Provincial Sports Centers for the Disabled, aimed at popularizing sports among children and youth of 5-18 age group as well as disabled citizens of every age group, guiding them and building up a sports culture in society. Over the last five years in the Black Sea region, a total of 301,052 citizens were served by Provincial Sports Centers while 1003 citizens attended the Provincial Sports Centers for the Disabled in 2014;
- coaching courses inaugurated under the coordination of federations and the General Directorate of Sports for different branches with a view to raising elite athletes in the Black Sea region. A total of 1487 participants were trained on coaching over the last five years;

### **Organization of major sport events**

49. The BSEC Member States are aware of the potential that major sport events can have for considerable input to the local, regional and national economy. In this direction, they have sought to provide opportunities and financial resources for the organization of world and European championships and big international sports tournaments that contribute to the economic growth of the host country and respectively impact employment, especially for young people. Among major forthcoming sport events in the region are the following:

#### Baku 2015 European Games

50. The European Games is a planned multi-sport event to be held among athletes from all over Europe. The Games were envisioned and are to be governed by the European Olympic Committees (EOC), which announced their launch at its 41<sup>st</sup> General Assembly in Rome, on 8 December 2012. The first edition of the European Games is going to take place in Baku, Azerbaijan, in June 2015, and every four years thereafter. The Games will be held from 12 to 28 June 2015, and will feature over 6,000 athletes from 50 National Olympic Committees competing in 20 sports. The European Games are the final continental Games to be initiated, after the Asian Games, Pan-American Games, All-Africa Games and Pacific Games. As of 2015, every continent will have continental games in the Olympic tradition.

## The European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF) “Tbilisi 2015”

51. EYOF is one of the numerous sports events to be hosted in Georgia in the coming years. The program of EYOF includes 9 sports: judo, tennis, artistic gymnastics, cycling, athletics, swimming, volleyball, handball and basketball. Over 3800 athletes aged 14-18 from 49 European countries will participate in the Festival. The sporting infrastructure of the city is being renovated according to the European standards and an ‘Athletes’ Village’ is being built. Sport arrangements of this scale are expected to play an important role in the sustainable development of the country’s economy. At the same time, they are expected to significantly increase the country’s visibility and popularity and therefore the flow of tourists. It is to be mentioned that tourism is one of the main components for the development of Georgia’s economy.

## **V. COOPERATION WITHIN THE BSEC FRAMEWORK**

52. Until recently, cooperation in the field of sports has not been among the areas of cooperation in BSEC. In January 2014, the Bulgarian Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC introduced youth and sports as an area of cooperation within BSEC human contacts dimension, with the aim to start discussion and exchange of ideas on national youth policies and finding ways on addressing youth issues at regional level, as well as exploring the financial and economic aspects of sports and its impact on the economic growth and employment. To this end, the first Meeting of Ministers in Charge of Youth and Sports of the BSEC Member States was held in Varna in April 2014, where the “Joint Declaration of the Ministers in Charge of Youth and Sports of the BSEC Member States on the Promotion of Youth Cooperation in the Region and the Contribution of Sports to Economic Growth and Employment” was adopted. The Joint Declaration includes the following provisions in the field of sports:

- Promote sustainable and efficient sports cooperation based on sports policies of mutual interest and benefit;
- Further promote the work for effective internal cross-sectoral cooperation among public authorities dealing with social affairs, youth, sports, employment and economic issues in order to ensure greater awareness of the social and economic role of sports;
- Exchange experience and best practices on the ways of using the full potential of sports to facilitate growth, employment, skill development and social cohesion, within the context of national and regional policy development;
- Further strengthen cooperation in the BSEC region through facilitating contacts in the field of youth and sports, organizing regional sport events, including with the involvement of civil society, developing innovative projects in these fields and ensuring opportunities for social inclusion.

53. All BSEC Working Groups have considered possibilities of inclusion of youth and sports issues in their respective agendas with a view to implementing the provisions of the Ministerial Declaration. Majority of the Working Groups agreed to include issues of youth and

sports in the agendas of their next meetings and some of them (WG on Energy, WG on Culture) advanced concrete ideas and proposals for future consideration.

54. The current Chairmanship-in-Office of Moldova has maintained the issue of youth and sports on its agenda, including a proposal on organizing a workshop on “Governance in professional sporting bodies in the BSEC countries”.

### **Black Sea Games**

55. The First Black Sea Games took place in 2007, in the Black Sea coastal cities of Turkey, in the framework of the Turkish Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC. This event showed that the peoples of the BSEC countries can come together and contribute to successful social events. It was also an opportunity to recognize the importance of people-to-people contact and its potential extension to other areas of cooperation within BSEC.

56. The history of this event goes back to 1997, when the first Statute of the Black Sea Sport Games was signed by Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine. After a long period of inactivity due to several objective reasons, a renewed interest in the games was expressed by countries in the region. In 2006, it was decided that all BSEC Member States would participate in this initiative and finally the new statute was signed by the Ministers Responsible of Sports of the BSEC Member States.

57. Today, a renewal of this initiative seems again necessary, at least as long as the Member States are eager to continue and support the regular organization of this sport event.

## **VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

58. There is a great need for developing cooperation among the BSEC member states in the field of sport, with a view to enhancing the social and economic role of sport and using its full potential as a driver of growth, employment and skill development. Exchange of experience and best practices would be necessary as a beginning of cooperation in sport in the BSEC framework.

59. Better use can be made of the potential of sport as an instrument for social inclusion in the policies, actions and programs of the BSEC Member States. This includes the contribution of sport to job creation and to economic growth and revitalization, particularly in disadvantaged areas. Special attention should be paid to vulnerable population groups such as women, people with disabilities and immigrants.

60. Sport is a dynamic and fast-growing sector and can serve as a tool for local and regional development, both in urban centers and rural areas. Due to the synergies that sport has with tourism it can stimulate the upgrading of infrastructure and the increase of tourist flow in the BSEC region.

61. Major sport events can have considerable input to the local, regional and national economy. They can, therefore, serve as a platform to launch and develop new services, including in the social sector. These could be new strategies, concepts, ideas and organizations that meet social needs of all kinds -from working conditions and education to community development and health- that extend and strengthen social cohesion.

