



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION
PABSEC

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FIFTIETH PLENARY SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
LEGAL AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

REPORT*

THE 25 YEARS OF THE PABSEC: ENHANCEMENT OF THE
INTERPARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION IN THE REGION

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Forty-Ninth Meeting of the Legal and Political Affairs Committee in Chisinau on 17-18 May 2017, during the discussion of the PABSEC Declaration on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the BSEC Organization, noted that the Parliamentary Assembly decided to qualitatively improve its role at international arena for broader involvement of parliamentary diplomacy in the context of existing and new directions of cooperation.
2. Taking into account that the PABSEC celebrates its Twenty-Fifth Anniversary in February 2018, it was decided to include in the agenda of the Fiftieth Meeting of the PABSEC Legal and Political Affairs Committee the issue “The 25 years of the PABSEC: Enhancement of the Interparliamentary Cooperation in the Region” with a view to elaborate the Report and the Recommendation to be submitted to the Fiftieth Plenary Session of the PABSEC General Assembly in Kyiv in November 2017.
3. 25 years is a quarter of a century. This is an important stage when it is necessary to evaluate results of cooperation and consider the future prospects. It is necessary to review what and how was done and to determine what and how could be changed. In twenty five years there were many changes in the Member States and the region itself. International interests, world order and global environment have changed. Therefore, it became imperative to review the years’ experience of cooperation taking into account these factors and to define new methods of cooperation to strengthening the current stage of development.
4. Although not all the national delegations provided information for use in the report and the recommendation (only Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Turkey have sent information), many of the issues raised in the report were taken from the speeches of the heads of national delegations during the general debates at the previous general assemblies.
5. The present Report can be considered as an evaluation of the progress achieved until today as well as an attempt to address the still prevailing problems. The Report highlights the need for further enhancement of economic cooperation in the Black Sea region through the use of available possibilities and resources as well as by creating mutually agreed favorable conditions in order to ensure the effective participation of all the countries and parties.

II. THE 25 YEARS OF THE PABSEC: ENHANCEMENT OF THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION IN THE REGION

6. Established on 26 February 1993, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation strives to achieve the goals and objectives set forth in the Declaration on the establishment of the PABSEC and makes a significant contribution to strengthening multilateral economic, social, cultural and political cooperation in the region. Twenty five years of joint activity demonstrates the ability of the Assembly to serve the needs of the region. Today the PABSEC is not only a democratic forum for interparliamentary dialogue, but also contributes to the strengthening of friendly relations and mutual respect. Further development of dialogue between representatives of national parliaments within the framework of the PABSEC promotes mutual understanding between the states and the peoples.
7. The Black Sea Economic Cooperation is a regional instrument of mutual cooperation and dialogue on wide range of issues and initiatives for its Member States. On the basis of the

common economic interest in the region, the politically different countries have established effective mechanism of cooperation based on the advantages of geographical proximity, mutual interests and broad prospects. Within the framework of regional cooperation and strengthening of economic ties, states are gradually becoming more open to the intensification of political and economic cooperation thus contributing to the enhancement of mutual trust narrowing the prospects of confrontation.

8. In today's world economic processes constitute the cooperation with the aim to create favorable conditions for promoting intra-regional processes for smooth movement of goods, services and economic resources. It is important to mention that in the context of globalisation the stakeholders in the global economy are not only individual countries or integration of countries, international economic organizations and international corporations, but also small and medium-sized companies that are involved in the system of international economic relations. Therefore, it is important to take into account the problems of countries at the local level.
9. The Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation has established a set of necessary mechanisms and framework of the arrangements that duly ensure sustainable development of economic and trade relations, deepening of contacts, intensification of multilateral cooperation in various spheres of life and the capacity building. These achievements create foundation to look more optimistically to the prospects of the enhancing of cooperation in the region in spite of some existing problems and contradictions.
10. The BSEC Economic Agenda towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership, which was adopted by the Heads of States and Government of the BSEC member states in Istanbul on 26 June 2012 is a roadmap document and outlines the framework for joint action that is needed to give new impetus to regeneration of the economic cooperation in the region with more new initiatives and concrete projects.
11. 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. The Economic Agenda for the future constitutes a deep shared conviction and a strong commitment of the member states to set up a roadmap in order to reach efficient solutions to the problems of common concern. Mutually supportive efforts of the member states further enhance economic cooperation in the region and lay down the foundation for stability, social cohesion and overall progress.
12. Today, BSEC is determined to make use of its potential of the as a platform of dialogue to play a more proactive, effective and constructive role in promoting the common goals. BSEC has 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 17 Observers and 16 Sectoral Dialogue Partners, who cooperate closely.

13. The process of economic integration is complex as the specific forms of interaction are determined by the level of economic development of the member states, as well as by their participation in other groupings. In this respect, the BSEC region is rather heterogeneous according to the levels of national economic development, pace of economic growth as well as social, cultural and historical factors and involvement of the member states in other regional cooperation schemes.
14. The development of regional economic cooperation brings an effective contribution to the strengthening of trust and friendly relations among the countries on the basis of mutual promotion of common values and interests. Strengthening of public institutions, good governance, the rule of law, an efficient market economy, improving the environment for trade, investment and development of the private sector facilitate wider and more resolute implementation of the joint programs and projects. It is in this context that the Black Sea Economic Cooperation the activities of which is aimed at turning the Black Sea into an area of peace, stability and prosperity is a real tool for enhancing the dialogue and cooperation.
15. It should also be noted that the balance of political and economic factors at different stages of development of cooperation is changing and this determines the slowdown in pace of the economic cooperation in the region. However, it should also be noted that the wider Black Sea region is undoubtedly a unique in terms of its ability to preserve economic ties in most complicated situations and to contribute to retain good neighborly relations in the region as a whole. The model of the economic cooperation helps in reducing political tensions which in turn contributes to resolution of political problems and stimulates the process of economic integration.
16. The dynamic process of the BSEC, through its mutually supportive inter-governmental, interparliamentary, banking, business and academic dimensions is a useful tool for seeking solutions to the complex and challenging problems of modern times. The BSEC continues to support the development of multidisciplinary cooperation. The organization in the framework of its working groups is actively engaged in such issues as the fight against drugs and arms trafficking, other transnational crimes and illegal migration; promotion of effective regional cooperation in environmental protection, culture, science and technology, education, energy, transport and other areas; promotion of overall and balanced economic growth, social and cultural development in the region through the joint actions towards the steady rise of living standards and improvement of living conditions of the peoples in the member states; and other topical areas of common interest.
17. Ensuring coherence and balance of the overall work and creation of a common system of mechanisms focused on the achievement of the identified goals and objectives substantially contributes to the improvement of the effectiveness of the activities. The individual efforts by the Member States along with the collective efforts within the spirit of mutual support contribute to the further enhancement of multilateral cooperation in the region. The reforms carried out within the countries coupled with the measures for promoting the regional integration paves the way towards the improvement of the economic situation and the greater synergy and prosperity, which in its turn promotes peace, harmony and good neighborly relations. Mobilization of the forces and resources ensures creation of a framework for coordination and harmonization of initiatives at the regional and international level as well as further integration into the European and global structures.
18. 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. The fact that the three BSEC Member States are the members of the EU and the growing interest shown by the EU towards the Black Sea region has provided a powerful incentive for consolidating regional cooperation and coordination.

19. The Declaration of the 25th Anniversary Summit of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the BSEC member states in Istanbul on 22 May 2017 recognizes that during the past 25 years BSEC has proven itself as a mature, inclusive and institutionalized organization which contributes to the promotion of regional cooperation and economic development. BSEC needs to be more responsive to the economic challenges of the evolving regional and international environment of today's globalized world. The Document stresses that in order to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of BSEC and to achieve a stronger future for the Organization, the Member States should continue and finalize in the nearest future the reform process. It also underlines the importance of streamlining the activities of the BSEC Working Groups which are the driving forces of our Organization, including by enhancing the participation of experts. The document stresses the need for strengthening the project-oriented dimension of BSEC and further development of the BSEC project capacity through the Project Development Fund, the Project Management Unit and the Project Promotion Facility.
20. It is extremely important to increase the level of coordination and efficient cooperation between the BSEC, the Parliamentary Assembly of the BSEC (PABSEC), the BSEC Business Council (BSEC BC), the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB) and the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS). Given the important role and potential of each of these institutions on the basis of their well-established and diverse experience, expertise and capacity, it is important to duly set the mechanisms for uninterrupted exchange of information and knowledge on the issues of cooperation and coordination in order to ensure effective achievement of the common goals.
21. National parliaments are bringing their valuable contribution to the achievement of the objective of turning the Black Sea into the sea of stability and prosperity by channeling the efforts of the interparliamentary cooperation in the PABSEC framework towards the improvement of the political climate, enhancement of dialogue and solidarity in the region. The regional framework will further continue to complement the concrete action at the national level with the aim to achieve the common goals of cooperation. In this context the Black Sea has to unite and not to separate us.
22. The Assembly has to become more active in expressing its support to new initiatives and in promoting adoption of the new laws and multilateral agreements envisaging implementation of the commitments and principles enshrined in the Declarations of the BSEC Summit meetings, the Charter of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Declarations of the Parliamentary Assembly.
23. The parliaments and the Parliamentary Assembly face the very important challenge to promote legislative changes, synergy and cohesion for the achievement of the sustainable economic growth and regional integration in the Black Sea region and in each individual member state as well as for the establishment of a strong and vibrant civil society as a solid foundation for the political stability in the region.
24. The Assembly has to strengthen its efforts to enhance the democratic reforms at the local and regional levels, the further improvement of national legislative systems and the promotion of the development of proper mechanisms ensuring multilateral cooperation

towards establishing peace and prosperity in the Black Sea region meeting the aspirations of the countries and peoples in the region.

25. The key to successful cooperation within the PABSEC framework is continual adherence and ongoing commitment to the “spirit of the PABSEC”, which maintains the atmosphere of mutual trust, mutual consultations and viable solutions based on a common consensus. This atmosphere is an invaluable achievement of the countries of the region during the many years of their fruitful cooperation and which has to be strengthened and invigorated in the years to come.
26. It is necessary to take due efforts for achieving greater coherence and coordination with the BSEC in drawing up the respective agendas in order to ensure that the issues and projects discussed within the BSEC may be complemented by the initiatives of the PABSEC. It is also important to ensure appropriate accountability of the member states in reinforcing cooperative efforts to promote synergies and partnership.
27. During the years of its activities the PABSEC has initiated many interesting undertakings like the Children and Youth Festival of the BSEC Member States “Golden Ferry”, the Meetings of the Public Television Broadcasters from the BSEC Member States, the Forum of the Presidents of the Constitutional Courts of the BSEC Member States and the Conference of Ombudsmen of the BSEC Member States. The PABSEC has also supported the organization of the business forums parallel to the PABSEC General Assemblies. At the same time the PABSEC initiated the cooperation among the governors and mayors of capital cities of the BSEC member states with the aim to pool the expertise of local authorities in order to make more efficient contribution to the attainment of the goals and objectives. It is noteworthy to mention the PABSEC initiative on organization of annual meetings of the secretaries general of the parliaments of the BSEC Member States and the organizations having observer status in the PABSEC. All these initiatives are directed towards bringing together the different components of the process of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and therefore their revival and continuation paves the way towards strengthening of involvement of various segments of population in the process of regional cooperation.
28. Parliamentarians, through their participation in regional and international parliamentary organisations have to bring their contribution in safeguarding security and stability through closer cooperation. In this respect, active interaction of PABSEC and its member parliaments with the European parliamentary organizations like European Parliament, NATO PA, OSCE PA, PACE, IPA CIS etc. will undoubtedly pave the way towards more constructive contribution to joint efforts for continuous enforcement of cooperation.
29. It is very important to concentrate not only on setting up of the necessary international mechanisms of coordination and implementation of the adopted decisions but also on the development of mechanisms for monitoring the process of implementation of the adopted decisions and more comprehensive realization of the Assembly recommendations, which create the basis for the further improvement of cooperation and achievement of better results. It is also necessary that the national delegations ensure the collective action of all countries in elaboration and agreement of draft documents, as well as necessary accountability being conscious of the importance of the contribution of each particular country to the achievement of the common goals.
30. The PABSEC has to continue further study of the national legislation with a view to eliminate or adapt certain provisions that hinder the process of shaping the necessary legal framework for the implementation of multilateral projects and agreements of the BSEC.

31. The endeavors for implementation of the BSEC roadmap document titled the “Economic Agenda towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership” are to be included in the regional and national policies, thus, strengthening the commitment of the parliaments and the governments to the outlined objectives through the establishment of an appropriate regulatory framework, preparation and implementation of the existing agreements and obligations and avoidance of duplication of actions.
32. The valuable contribution of the PABSEC observers and partners, as well as the PABSEC Special Representatives to the international programs and projects should be stressed. Within the framework of such cooperation, several seminars were organized in cooperation with the parliaments of Israel, France and Slovakia. Upon the invitation of the PABSEC Special Representative to the Silk Road Projects, the PABSEC representatives took part in the Business Summit in the framework of the Chinese Initiative “One Belt One Road”. In 2018 it is planned to organize business forums and conference in Belarus and Ukraine, to organize an international Black Sea forum “Transport and trade in the BSEC region” in cooperation with the BSEC and the BSEC-URTA, as well as the visit of the PABSEC delegation to China and a meeting with the leadership of the Silk Road Project.
33. Taking into account the fact that every year regional and global politics undergo considerable changes and that the visions of the countries in the region also radically change, it is necessary and useful to evolve PABSEC’s common vision on the basis of the already adopted documents. In order to be successful in shaping such a vision it is important that such a vision implies practical actions that will be limited in number with due regard to the capacities and priorities of the BSEC member states.
34. Meeting the challenges of the new millennium and taking into account the need to fully unlock the potential of the Member States, the Assembly has to strengthen its role and become a more active player in the wider Black Sea region and in each individual member state. The PABSEC has to take necessary steps to strengthen its authority to increase the effectiveness of its work and the work of the International Secretariat.
35. In this regard, the Assembly, at its 45th Plenary Session of the General Assembly in Chisinau on 9-10 June 2015 adopted the Declaration on Strengthening the Status of the PABSEC, which, inter alia, states that “PABSEC has demonstrated the necessity and expediency of its existence and activities as a body that ensures fruitful cooperation and effective communication between the parliamentarians of our countries in a spirit of confidence and constructive cooperation within the framework of good-neighborly relations, cordiality and partnership. The rising importance of the wider Black Sea area in international affairs in ensuring the atmosphere of peace, stability and cooperation, as well as the fact that mutual action between the PABSEC and the BSEC on the basis of equality and common strategy determines the success of achieving the objectives and achieving the concrete results and ensuring the best practical results”.
36. The Document also notes that due to uncertainty of the PABSEC status the cooperation between the Parliamentary Assembly and the BSEC remains rather weak preventing effective achievement of the goals of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and posing complications in the work with other parliamentary assemblies and international organizations. To this end the Assembly proposes 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;

- *take necessary measures* to bring the Article 20 on the Parliamentary Assembly of the BSEC out of the Chapter VII “BSEC Related Bodies” of the BSEC Charter and to formulate a new Chapter on the Parliamentary Assembly keeping the contents of the Article 20 of the Charter.
 - *instruct* the PABSEC International Secretariat to prepare in a short possible time the draft Statute of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and to submit it to the approval of the PABSEC General Assembly.
37. In the period of 2015-2016 the speakers of the national parliaments of the 11 BSEC Member States (Albania, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine) signed the Declaration, but the absence of the signature of Armenia halted the process of taking measures for necessary changes. In this respect, the parliaments of the BSEC Member States need to make every effort to complete the process of signing the Declaration on Strengthening the Status of the PABSEC.
38. Determination of the status of the Parliamentary Assembly in 1998 as a related body automatically deprived it of the possibility to have the legal status of an international organisation. For many years the members of the Assembly recurrently raised the question of the legal status of the PABSEC and its relation with the BSEC on the occasion of the meetings of the General Assembly and the Committees stressing the need to find the way of regulating the question concerning the PABSEC legal status within the norms of the international practice.
39. It should be noted that although on every occasion the BSEC stressed the significance of the Parliamentary Assembly, the misunderstanding or absence of coordination in the drafting process resulted that the BSEC Charter adopted by the Yalta Summit in 1998 could not determine the appropriate place for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation putting it in equal terms with other dimensions of the BSEC process referred as “The Related Bodies to the BSEC” together with the BSEC Business Council, Black Sea Trade and Development Bank and the International Center for Black Sea Studies.
40. Mutual action on the basis of equality and common strategy determines the success of achieving the objectives and the desired level of cooperation. Therefore, the Parliamentary Assembly and the national parliaments have to use their possibilities and contribute to the strengthening of the status of the Assembly through adoption of the necessary decisions aiming at improvement of the efficiency of the PABSEC and its International Secretariat. This is very important for achieving the concrete results and ensuring the best practical results.
41. There is no doubt that the cooperation among the Black Sea countries will become more effective with the help of coordinated interaction between the parliaments and the governments, between the PABSEC and the BSEC. This will help pave the way towards formation of the policy and the political support to the joint project elaborated in the framework of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.
42. It is also important to fully use the existing mechanisms and platforms in order to unlock the political and economic potential towards achievement of more significant development of the economic cooperation.

III. CONCLUSIONS

43. During the past period of time, the Parliamentary Assembly, which unites today the parliaments of 12 member states, has proved its viability, whose priorities have always been and will remain to be the enhancement of economic potential of the countries in the region, the development of regional and international trade, increasing of welfare of the peoples, the strengthening of stability, peace and security in the region and on the whole European continent.
44. The parliaments and the governments of the BSEC countries have to exploit their possibilities at the utmost in order to boost the economic cooperation in the Black Sea region with a view of consolidating the process of establishing peace, security and political stability through greater cohesion between the member states for the successful realization of shared objectives of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.
45. Effective interaction between the executive and legislative branches not only enhances the effectiveness of the activities in the region, but also gives a strong impulse to the enhancement of integration processes. The Assembly has to work more closely with the BSEC and its related bodies in the process of effective implementation of the “Economic Agenda towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership”, which constitutes the common program of action for the Member States for the future.
46. The PABSEC has also to pay more attention to the broader public participation and ensuring their access to the general information on the activities of the BSEC and the PABSEC in the region with the aim to promote the ideas and goals of the Black Sea cooperation. This, in its turn, requires the effective involvement and active participation of the authorities at regional, national and local levels, as well as the representatives of the non-governmental organizations, the business and industrial communities, the scientific and technical circles, youth and the mass media. In this context, it is possible to consider the proposal on resuming the PABSEC initiatives designed for strengthening the cooperation in various fields and at various levels.
47. It is also important to ensure more active role of the civil society in the process of the regional integration. It is important to promote the implementation of the relevant programs aimed at strengthening civil society and the mechanisms of citizens’ participation. Increased involvement of civil society in the wider Black Sea region will contribute to the strengthening of solidarity in achieving the goals and objectives of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. Civil society can become a valuable source of strengthening regional initiatives, contributing to regional consensus and solidarity in addressing common problems.
48. Parliamentary diplomacy acquires new features today in the context of a broader re-evaluation of the role of national parliaments and parliamentary organizations. The parliamentary component in the international dialogue is an important element of interaction on many issues. In this regard, the strengthening of the status of the PABSEC and the role of the Assembly will contribute to the timely and effective achievement of the common goals and objectives of the regional cooperation.
49. Significant enhancement of the role of parliamentary diplomacy and parliamentary cooperation as an important foreign policy resource possessing the unique opportunities to maintain the contacts and searching for the points of common interest between the representatives of the peoples is of great importance for the shaping of necessary public opinion and strengthening cohesion and trust among the nations.
50. 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.

51. Summing up the experience of the past and evaluating the opportunities for the future cooperation, it is certain that the Parliamentary Assembly has a very promising outlook. The Assembly is capable to do much more towards bringing peoples together in the region and finding a balance of common interest if the due attention is paid to the achievement of better results in the framework of the “spirit of the PABSEC”.
52. Acting in this spirit, and with the aim to achieve the main objective of transforming the Black Sea into a sea of peace, stability and prosperity, parliaments and governments should ensure the maximum support by the peoples of the member states in building a better future. This task can be achieved only through the joint efforts of parliaments and governments and the mobilization of public support for the implementation of joint projects, multilateral agreements, BSEC resolutions, and the PABSEC recommendations.