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THE TWENTY FOURTH PLENARY SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
LEGAL AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

REPORT^{*}

REGIONAL DIMENSION OF STABILITY AND SECURITY – PERSPECTIVE OF THE BSEC REGION

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In the world of mounting global threats stability and security has been a topic of growing attention lately. Standing together in upholding stability and managing the posed security problems has become the main challenge for the contemporary societies. Today, the vital need for security and stability is recognised as high priority on the agenda both within the individual countries and at international level.
2. Stable and secure environment is a precondition for development and cooperation. Within this context, originally conceived to identify mutually shared interests and to foster trade and economic relations through regional cooperation, the BSEC is currently deliberating on the ways and means of enhancing its contribution to security and stability in the Black Sea region.
3. The Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States in its last Statement of 25 June 2004 has stated the “determination to concentrate efforts on safeguarding regional security and to align them to the broader endeavour to eliminate all forms of hostility, conflicts, violence, crisis, violation of human rights and in particular international terrorism”.
4. The Legal and Political Affairs Committee at its Twenty Third Meeting in Durrës, Albania on 2 April 2004 took decision to tackle the problems of regional dimension of stability and security with a view of the Black Sea region and to analyse and examine the efforts at national and international levels regarding this issue.
5. In this respect, the Twenty Fourth meeting of the Committee in Baku on 13-14 October 2004 is dedicated to “Regional Dimension of Stability and Security – Perspective of the BSEC region” with a view to elaborate the Report and the Recommendation for the discussions at the Twenty Fourth Plenary Session of the General Assembly in Antalya, Turkey in November 2004.

II. REGIONAL DIMENSION OF STABILITY AND SECURITY – PERSPECTIVE OF THE BSEC REGION

The Regional Outlook

6. Located at the crossroads between Europe and Asia, the Black Sea region represents an axis of increasing geopolitical importance. Linking the countries of a wider geographic area including those of the Caucasus, the Caspian, and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe with different political dynamics, internal diversity and

conflicts, the area is a scene of intersection of economic, political and strategic interests of the various regional and global players.

7. The security threats, concerns and challenges in the Black Sea region are of diverse nature and multidimensional scope. These threats and challenges constitute intertwined problems that require multifaceted responses by different national organizations and in some cases partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society acting appropriately in accordance with democratic norms and principles as well as constitutional provisions of each state. Many of the new threats, concerns, and other challenges to regional security are trans-national in nature and require appropriate framework of cooperation at multilateral level.
8. In order to better understand the issue of stability and security in the Black Sea region it is rather expedient to examine what are the possible threats in this respect. If we generalize the threats in the region we could differentiate between the threats proceeding from the domestic evolution within each country, threats proceeding from the problems in the relationship between the countries in the region and threats proceeding from the outside of the region. Contested borders, mixed national and ethnic groups, enforced migration, economic deprivation, authoritarian regimes, bad governance and competition from outsiders for influence prevail as major risks for the security in this region.
9. Among the domestic sources of threats to stability and peace one can mention the intricate problems generated by the economic or social crisis. Increasing joblessness, high inflation, pauperization of large segments of population, corruption, organised crime and trafficking undermine existing regimes as well as the equilibrium in the region and become sources for instability. The solution of these problems requires adequate domestic economic as well as social policies and effective economic and financial assistance from the international community.
10. Other domestic sources of concern to stability and peace stem from interethnic relations within the countries. The diversity of people in the Black Sea region living side by side for centuries has been a source of cultural enrichment, on one hand, and of potential conflicts, on the other. The existence of a big number of national minorities in some countries of the Black Sea area generates problems concerning granting of the rights to these minorities and loyalty of these people to the state in which they are living and whose citizens they are. Any one-sided approach to these problems sparks conflict situations and create real danger for the peace and stability in the region, thus affecting stability in broader European space and the world at large.

11. Separatism followed by some national minority leaders has led to bloody conflicts. After disintegration of the Soviet Union most of the former Soviet countries were thrown into ethnic and political conflicts or territorial, nationalistic, ethnic and religious disputes. It is rather difficult task to manage these tensions today, when the most of the conflicts are frozen and the mediation process has been protracted without reaching any solution. Unfortunately, the stalemate is retained for years and the situation is immovable. The Black Sea region remains riddled with dormant or frozen conflicts and if solutions are not reached timely there is a real danger for them to re-explode.
12. Along with the internal instability, presence of confrontations between the states in the region compounds the task of the member countries to fully benefit from the economic cooperation process. Along with the great human suffering and social hardships, the conflicts impose huge economic burden on the parties involved. Conflicts leave behind a series of interlocking trade embargoes, blockades, disrupted communications, lost lives, occupied territories, refugees and squalid conditions.
13. It is obvious, that unstable political climate, unresolved conflicts, declining living standards, refugees, border disputes and security concerns in the region undermine normal national or regional economic activities leaving the region turbulent and uncertain for further development and progress. The economic misery causes for the young and skilled to leave the region for search of better lives in other countries for themselves and their families.
14. An unstable region is also a fertile ground for crime and illegal activities, which affects not only the lives of local people but also those in neighbouring countries and regions. Criminal groups use political and economic instabilities to facilitate criminal activities. Through corruption or the promise of a better future people become engaged in crime or become the commodities of crime. There is a high degree of international cooperation between criminal groups. Even the countries, which are not directly involved in the conflicts, suffer economic, social and political consequences of the regional instability.
15. Organized crime has been increasing both quantitatively and qualitatively, spreading its criminal tentacles throughout the global criminal network. Criminal groups are often involved in different types of crime at a time, especially drug trafficking, illegal immigration, trafficking in human beings, commodity smuggling, fraud and other forms of financial crime. The increased mixing of legal and illegal activities by organized criminal groups has become a well established practice. Investment of criminal proceeds in the legitimate economy as well as widespread use of legal structures for criminal purposes has been a major political concern in the countries for past years.

16. The interaction between organized criminality and international terrorism has increased worldwide. The most recent wave of terrorism has been global in its scope. The international terrorism cannot be associated with any religion, ethnic group or geographic area. Terrorism poses key threat and challenge to the national, regional and international security. We have all witnessed the series of bloody attacks on civil population in various countries throughout the world and also in the countries of the BSEC region.
17. Combating terrorism is a difficult and complex task, which requires a broad cooperation and calls for a comprehensive approach, involving a complex mixture of political, diplomatic, economic and financial measures. Most of the BSEC countries are concerned with an increase of cross-border crime, which is linked to economic integration and increased permeability of borders.
18. International terrorism has been targeted as a major threat to regional security and stability in the basic BSEC documents. The BSEC states have been actively involved in the fight against international terrorism addressing threats and pursuing preventive measures through more effective law enforcement and intensifying cooperation by adopting the “Agreement among the Governments of the BSEC Participating States on Cooperation in Combating Crime, in particular in its organized forms”, as well as the “Additional Protocol on Cooperation in Combating Crime, in particular in its Organized Forms” and the “Additional Protocol on Combating Terrorism”.

International cooperation: contribution to regional stability and security

19. In a globalised world security and prosperity issues increasingly depend upon an effective multilateral system. It has to be secured that stronger international society, well functioning international institutions and proper international order is developed in order to adequately counteract any threat to global peace and security.
20. The Black Sea region is becoming increasingly important for transatlantic security for its strategic importance as a link and transit area at the crossroads of Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia and respectively, stability in the Black Sea region has direct repercussions on the whole Euro-Atlantic area.
21. Growing interest over energy routes from Central Asia and the Caspian regions elevates the importance of Black Sea security and greatly influences future economic and political developments across the region. It is without doubt that this has intensified the international community’s desire to help eliminate instability in the region.
22. It should be noted that the Black Sea region has always been a scene of competition between great powers. Current shifting of spheres of influence in the

new world order have led to an entirely new setting in the Black Sea region with multiplied number of political, economic and military actors able to influence the region's future.

23. The problems emanating from the Black Sea region ranging from smuggling of drugs, people and guns across the region to ethnically based conflicts, border problems and demographic challenges have the potential to spill over into the EU area. With the latest round of enlargement and further enlargements planned in the near future, these issues acquire ever greater importance for the EU, which must find ways and means to avoid an escalation of various problems before they affect its member countries and handle security issues that impact stability of its members.
24. The European Security Strategy "A secure Europe in a better world" adopted by the European Union on 12 December 2003 stresses the importance of immediate geography even in the era of globalisation and calls for rapid implementation of new neighbourhood strategy implying development of a policy of constructive cooperation including cross-border cooperation and partnership also with the BSEC states. It aims to contribute to regional security and stability through stronger practical cooperation, including political dialogue putting forth enhanced set of measures to strengthen individual and collective contribution to addressing threats and building security, as well as the international community's fight against terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and regional conflicts.
25. The European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization are the two supporting beams of the European security architecture for the twenty-first century. The BSEC countries, who are not members of these organisations, look towards the membership with the European Union and NATO. Strong attraction to EU and NATO membership, in its turn, provides powerful incentive for domestic reforms leading to consolidation of political and economic stability.
26. NATO's relations with the countries of the Black Sea region have steadily developed and extended. In this regard, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) and the Partnership for Peace programmes could serve as a basis for building closer relationships. Yet, the efforts of the countries of the Black Sea to build stable regional cooperation based on economic interaction remains as paramount importance in guaranteeing regional security.
27. In its Communiqué adopted at the Istanbul Summit on 28 June 2004, NATO notes the importance of the Black Sea region for Euro-Atlantic security. It underlines that littoral countries, Allies and Partners are working together to contribute to further strengthening security and stability in the area and that NATO is prepared

to explore means to complement these efforts building upon existing forms of regional cooperation.

28. The OSCE having in its membership all the BSEC countries functions as a key source for preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in the Black sea region. OSCE missions and other field operations in the conflict areas are putting effort for fostering security and cooperation.
29. The Council of Europe, set up with the mission to defend a free and democratic Europe, is developed into an alliance for the collective guarantee of human rights, common principles of democracy and the rule of law. It takes measures to contribute to European stability and security in accordance with its specific mandate and capabilities.
30. Recognizing the fact that the states of the region face both traditional threats to security and new concerns and challenges that in view of their complex characteristics are multidimensional in nature, the existing mechanisms of cooperation within the framework of the UN, OSCE, NATO, WEU, Council of Europe and the EU have to be expanded and enlarged.
31. Development of sub-regional cooperation provides propitious framework for discussing common preoccupations and merging common interest. Various regional and sub-regional initiatives lead to significant achievement in partnership and cooperation in the European space promoting stability and security. In this respect, strengthening interaction with European regional and sub-regional organisations and initiatives such as South-East European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), the Central European Initiative (CEI), the South Eastern Europe Cooperative Process (SEECF) and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is very important.

Commitments and measures

32. The BSEC Economic Agenda for the Future implies a special stand regarding the importance of soft security measures for multilateral economic cooperation, with specific tasks on combating organized crime, illegal trafficking in drugs and arms, terrorism, corruption and money laundering in the countries of the Black Sea region.
33. Along with the implementation of BSEC Economic Agenda a political dialogue has been expanded among the countries around the Black Sea. The BSEC has been able to establish a permanent framework of dialogue for its members and a spirit of cooperation towards mutual economic benefits.

34. Yet, instability and uncertainty persist in the Black Sea region. Unresolved disputes, potential conflicts, organized crime and trafficking all constitute sources of instability. To this end, in order to encompass new threats, which include political, economic, social, environmental, etc. aspects traditional concept and approach has to be expanded.
35. Inasmuch as economic effectiveness is of decisive importance, BSEC is a convenient platform for the Black Sea states. Effective multilateral cooperation can turn into the most beneficial tool for a stabilization and peace in the entire Black Sea region.
36. Given the fact that the regional economic cooperation is impossible without proper regional stability, the BSEC even if not dealing with political questions yet, can in a foreseeable future, create a legal and political framework for the solution of stability problems of the regional character.
37. The strong economic ties and expansion of good relationships between neighbours helps remedy and settle various disputes. Interaction on a range of issues contributes to the development of regional security by fostering personal contacts and mutual understanding.
38. The progressive economic interconnectedness gradually makes states more open for intensification of cooperation reinforcing establishment of prosperity, stability, mutual trust, opening up the opportunities for reconciliation and narrowing the room for confrontations.
39. Within this context, it is extremely important to develop, further formulate and implement necessary stability policies in a new sense of partnership and cooperation, based on trust, confidence and a higher level of political and economic collaboration.
40. In its Working Paper the BSEC ad hoc Study Group on examining the Ways and Means of Enhancing the BSEC Contribution to Strengthening Security and Stability in the Region presented recommendations for possible interaction between the BSEC and other relevant international, regional and national entities. These recommendations imply: (1) Preparation of a revised version of the Platform for Cooperation between the BSEC and the EU, incorporating also additional provisions on the BSEC security dimension; (2) Consultations with the OSCE, Council of Europe, UN Economic Commission for Europe, the European Commission and the EU Council (Office of the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy), OECD, NATO, CIS Executive Committee, other relevant international, regional and sub-regional organizations and select international financial institutions for a general presentation of BSEC and its activities and for the exploration of possible ways for further cooperation; (3) Establishment of more stable working relations, including regular exchanges

of information and documentation, with the OSCE institutions, structures and field missions, as well as with other international organizations having distinct responsibilities in the area of security and stability, as appropriate; (4) Gradual development of a network of research centres specializing in international affairs in the BSEC countries and promotion of joint projects on the Black Sea region with similar institutions in Europe and elsewhere.

The Role of the National Parliaments

41. The Parliamentary Assembly of the BSEC, complementing the regional cooperation by discussing issues in political, economic, environmental, social and cultural fields adds a sense of common interest, thus, ensuring that the existing cultural, religious and other differences do not hinder but rather enrich the cooperation.
42. Objective of turning the Black Sea into the sea of peace, stability and prosperity can only be achieved by mobilising parliaments in safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as working towards improvement of political climate promoting stability in the region.
43. With a view to strengthen political will for more regional cohesion and synergy, the Parliamentarians of the Black Sea countries need to be better informed on the rapid changing environment in the region. To this end, the Assembly can promote organization of consultative talks on topical issues in the region as well as take advantage of a mechanism of fact-finding missions in order to raise awareness of the Assembly members.
44. The national parliaments have important responsibility to promote necessary legislative changes supporting democratic development and strengthening stability in the Black Sea region, as well as in each individual member state.
45. It is noteworthy to mention that the issue of security and stability is not new in the agenda of the Parliamentary Assembly. Back in 1995 the Assembly organized the Seminar on “Peace and Stability in the Black Sea Region” together with the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States and called on the national parliaments to concert their efforts in order to reach political will for finding solution to the existing conflicts.
46. Moreover, at its eighteenth meeting in Tbilisi on 27-28 September 2001 the Legal and political Affairs Committee debated on the subject “Cooperation among the PABSEC Member Countries in Promoting Political Stability through Economic Integration” and adopted relevant report and recommendation.
47. 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 organisations like European Parliament, NATO PA, OSCE PA, PACE, IPA CIS etc. will undoubtedly pave the way towards a constructive contribution to joint efforts and undertakings for enforcement democratic development and strengthening regional stability and security.

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

48. The way to overall stability in the BSEC region can be paved by constructive dialogue and cooperation. Promotion of cooperation is an essential condition for effective policies directed towards cohesion and solidarity for a better future in the BSEC area and beyond.
49. Bearing in mind that the benefits of peace and prosperity are due not only to the commitments of the individual states but also to the contributions of the peoples, the Parliamentary Assembly has to fortify its efforts through the parliamentary diplomacy to pave the way towards confidence building for establishment of lasting stability and securing freedom and democracy in the region.
50. Parliaments and governments of the BSEC countries have to exploit their possibilities henceforth in order to boost economic cooperation in the Black Sea region with a view of consolidating the process of establishing peace, security and stability through greater cohesion between the member countries for the successful realisation of shared objectives of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.
51. Given the fact that the regional security is affected by the threats of global nature, the member states have important role to play in promoting international cooperation for peace and stability through successful implementation of adequate efforts.