

**Welcoming Remarks by
the Secretary-General for International Economic Relations and
Development Cooperation Mr. Constantine Papadopoulos
at the 4th International Black Sea Symposium on
“The Black Sea Region in Transition: New Challenges and Concepts”
(Vouliagmeni, 19-23 September 2011)**

Honourable Guests,
Participants to the Symposium,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank ICBSS Director General Dr. Zefi Dimadama for inviting me to address the 4th International Black Sea Symposium on the “Black Sea Region in Transition: New Challenges and Concepts.” It is a real pleasure for me to be here with you today.

The annual International Black Sea Symposium has offered young professionals, since 2008, a unique opportunity to study and interact in a multicultural and multinational environment. The participants – including members of parliament, diplomats, policy-makers, academics, journalists, entrepreneurs, civil-society leaders and researchers who come not only from the wider Black Sea area, but also from EU Member States, the United States and Central Asia – will have the opportunity to gain insights into issues of interest for the Black Sea region as well as to exchange ideas.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The BSEC Organisation is the oldest, most representative and institutionally most-developed regional Organisation in the area, established in 1992. The BSEC Member States cover an area of 20 million square kilometers and have a combined population of more than 330 million inhabitants. Greece, as a founding BSEC Member State, has set as a permanent goal not only to safeguard the achievements of BSEC, but also to support their enrichment with new initiatives.

In this context, in the 1990s Greece proposed to establish and finance a research and training institution focusing on the wider Black Sea region. Thus was the ICBSS

founded in 1998, and six years later, in 2004, it was awarded the Related Body Status and acknowledged as the think-tank of the Organisation. Today, ICBSS activities are a key component of BSEC's operations, including preparing, analysing and providing input for its development objectives, cooperation and encouraging the involvement of public and private actors in the region. Furthermore, the ICBSS contributes vital expertise on Black Sea area issues at an international level.

All these years, the ICBSS, as an independent research and training centre, has been successful in supporting policy-oriented research and capacity-building initiatives in the broader Black Sea region while, at the same time, carrying out studies, offering policy advice and coordinating activities upon specific mandates by the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

To give you an example, the BSEC Member States have agreed to launch a process, with the ICBSS's contribution, aiming to update the BSEC's Economic Agenda for the Future that was first adopted in 2001. The objective is for our reflexion to reach a level of maturity that will allow the adoption of a new Economic Agenda reflecting the challenges currently facing the economies of the BSEC region. ICBSS's contribution to the BSEC Working Group for a revised Economic Agenda for the Future will guarantee, I am sure, the full success of this task.

I could also mention the ICBSS's successful event for the promotion of the Program "Initiative on the Black Sea and Central Asia" of the OECD Development Center held last May in Athens (30/5/2011).

I would also like to take advantage of this opportunity of being with you here today to say a few words about our main priorities in the BSEC Organisation, which were presented during the last Hellenic Chairmanship-in-Office (1 June–31 Dec. 2010).

The Hellenic Chairmanship-in-Office initiated a new concept under the motto "The Black Sea turns Green". Its aim was to promote green development and entrepreneurship in the BSEC Region. We strongly believe that regional cooperation and development should be fully streamlined with environmental protection.

The emblem of our Chairmanship, an ancient coin of the 5th Century BC fashioned by the engraver Dexamenus of Chios and discovered in the strait of Kerch which connects the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, represented a “heron” («ερωδιός»), reminding us all that cooperation existed among the peoples of the Black Sea since ancient times and conveying, at the same time, an ecological message for the protection of the environment.

In accordance with our central theme, we undertook initiatives in the fields of green development and entrepreneurship. I could mention the Meeting of Ministers of Energy, under the heading “Green Energy Development Initiative”, hosted in Nauplion (12/10/2010), and the BSEC Member States Common Declaration on combating Climate Change, which was presented to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and adopted as an official text (Cancun, Mexico, 29/11–10/12/2010).

Though now, of course, the baton has been passed on to the Russian Chairmanship, we still aim to keep this initiative alive throughout the coming Chairmanships-in-Office. Indeed, wherever possible, we intend to propose forms of cooperation with a pronounced “green” character. We were glad to see that the previous Romanian Chairmanship, as well as the current Russian Chairmanship-in-Office, embraced this innovative theme for cooperation and followed up with a Meeting of BSEC Ministers of the Environment (Bucharest, 31/5/2011) and a decision to launch a Task Force on Green Energy in the framework of the relevant Working Group on Energy.

We have always supported the project-oriented character of the BSEC Organisation, including cooperation for business projects in the Black Sea Region. Thus, we organised a successful Business Forum in Thessaloniki, as a side event to the Meeting of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (26/11/2010), to promote green development and entrepreneurship.

Moreover, we have intensified our efforts in the framework of the “Black Sea Trade and Investment Promotion Program (BSTIP), which is a UNDP Program co-financed by Greece and Turkey. Desired fields for cooperation under present difficult economic circumstances are green entrepreneurship, small- and medium-sized enterprises, trade and investment and green banking.

Furthermore, we have put at BSEC's disposal the so-called Hellenic Development Fund (HDF), which is a trust fund within the BSEC system financed by Greece. The first call of proposals has been concluded on renewable energy and energy-efficiency issues. Six (6) projects will be financed out of the twenty (20) presented to the Committee of the Fund, involving organisations from seven (7) BSEC Member States (Azerbaijan, Albania, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia and Turkey) and two (2) BSEC Related Bodies, ICBSS and the Business Council.

On this occasion, I wish success to the ICBSS project and hope that such success will carry through to the next eligible sectors for development cooperation to be shortly announced by the BSEC-HDF. These sectors are transportation, trade and economic cooperation, combating organised crime (mainly combating human trafficking), good governance, environmental protection and tourism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish you all a very successful Symposium and pleasant and useful stay in Athens.
