

BSEC Activities in the Field of Transport

I am honoured to represent the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organisation at this Workshop which addresses a highly important issue for the European and Asian States.

Established 23 years ago with the purpose to promote a lasting and closer cooperation among the States in the BSEC Region, our organization has endeavoured over the years to enhance the cooperation among its 12 Member States. The States of the region made progress in shaping a common vision and in building up a common agenda, in order that the regional cooperation in the BSEC framework really serve their common interests. I refer to the *BSEC Economic Agenda: Towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership*, adopted by the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, subsequently endorsed by the BSEC Summit, held in Istanbul on 26 June 2012.

The *Economic Agenda* sets as one of its goals the **establishment of an efficient transport network** among our Member States.

To attain this goal, it mentions on the first place “promoting sustainable transport systems which meet the economic, social and environmental needs of the people of the Black Sea Region, in order to reduce regional disparities and to link the BSEC Region’s transport infrastructure to European and Asian Networks”.

Most of provisions of the goal are in the active phase of their implementation and the dynamics of its work in the field transport cooperation is quite high.

In fact, since its inception, BSEC paid special attention to cooperation in transport, focusing on how to utilize effectively the intra-regional capacity and the growing transit potential of the Black Sea Region. Our Organization has developed several important regional projects, mutually complementary, which are of major significance for the Black Sea Region, as well as for the Euro-Asian Region.

The most important BSEC transport developments are related to the development of road and maritime infrastructure, as well as to facilitation of road transport of goods.

The three important BSEC projects in these fields constitute also the BSEC’s contribution to the extension of Trans-European Networks and the development of Euro-Asian transport links.

These projects are expected to do much to foster intra-BSEC trade, as well as tourism, transport infrastructure and investments in the region.

The Black Sea Ring Highway project envisages a four lane ring highway system, approximately 7500 km long, to connect the BSEC Member States with each other.

Since the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Coordinated Development of the Black Sea Ring Highway in Belgrade on 19 April 2007 and its entering into force on 1 November 2008, the Member States succeeded in adopting of the necessary legal base, established the Joint Permanent International Secretariat in Thessaloniki, managed by the leading public Greek company “Egnatia Odos”, and proceeded with the alignment of the Black Sea Ring Highway main route.

At present, the Steering Committee is at the stage of finalizing the Ring route. Afterwards, it will proceed with elaboration of a Master Plan and project financing schemes.

In the meantime, Turkey has constructed its part of the Ring Highway from the border of Georgia to Istanbul, while Greece has put into operation the Egnatia Odos Highway, which connects the Ioanninan Sea to the Turkish frontier.

In Moscow, on 21 October 2011, the Ministers of Transport of the BSEC Member States decided to include the Model Highway Initiative presented by International Road Transport Union (IRU) into the future Black Sea Ring Highway’s Master Plan, thus aiming the creation of modern highways with road infrastructure to the highest European standards. A pre-feasibility Study “Development of the Baku-Tbilisi-Batumi-Trabzon Model Highway” was finalised in November 2012 by “Egnatia Odos” company, with financing of the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank and IRU. The work on the Model Highway Initiative entered the active phase.

The project on the development of the **Motorways of the Sea in the BSEC Region** is about strengthening the maritime links among the ports of the BSEC Member States. This project aims at creating the necessary infrastructure for better connecting the Black Sea ports and, also, the Black Sea with the Mediterranean and the Caspian Seas, including upgrading of port facilities, identification of projects of common interest, securing free and fair competition in international shipping, facilitation of access to all modes of transport and enhancement of maritime security and safety in the BSEC Region.

The Master Plan of the project foresees an analysis on the MoS Ports and identification of key links, key nodes and interconnections needed to improve the interoperability on main routes. It also foresees to focus on such issues as:

- the optimization of the capacity and efficiency of existing ports in order to promote intermodal services;
- integration of safety and environmental concerns in the design and implementation of the MoS;
- promotion of sustainable mobility of persons and goods.

As of today, 41 ports were proposed for their participation in the development of the MoS.

An Ad Hoc Working Group was established in order to implement the MoS project, consisting of representatives of the BSEC Member States, supported by a Joint Technical Secretariat, managed on a two year term rotation basis – currently by the Maritime Authorities of Romania, to be followed by the Maritime Authorities of the Russian Federation and Ukraine until 2021. Its next meeting will take place in the near future in Constanța.

Special attention was also paid to the integrated approach in maritime and inland waterways activities, including the development of competitive shipping and port infrastructure for providing sustainable multimodal transport and contributing to the development of Eurasian transport links.

Another related issue which is under consideration of the Working Group on Transport is the elaboration of a **Regional Integrated Maritime Policy** in the field of maritime transport, ports, shipbuilding and ship-repairing in the BSEC Region. The purposes of shaping up such a policy would be:

- creating conditions for maximum increase in the sustainable exploitation of the Black Sea;
- improving the quality of life and developing the maritime sector in the costal areas;
- developing a competitive, environmentally friendly and safe maritime transport.

The BSEC Member States agreed to consider the possibility to establish a new ad hoc working group in the future in order to elaborate on the Integrated Maritime Policy.

An issue which is of utmost importance for the transport industry was the object of an additional MoU on **Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods at the BSEC Region**, signed on 6 March 2002 in Kyiv. The MoU entered into force on 20 July 2006.

The purpose of this MoU is to enhance co-operation among the Governments of the BSEC Member States towards the harmonization of certain key-elements concerning international road transport of goods in the region, in line with internationally accepted agreements, as well as with related rules and

standards, *inter alia* by simplifying and harmonizing procedures, formalities and documentation.

A new project related to the progressive liberalization of international road transport of goods was launched, consisting of the establishment of a **BSEC Permit System**. On 16 February 2010, seven BSEC Member States, namely Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Turkey, launched a BSEC Pilot Project on Transit Permit within – a BSEC Regional license similar in nature with the ECMT (European Conference of Ministers of Transport) license.

The BSEC Permit is a historical milestone in the facilitation of road transport of goods and for the gradual liberalization of transport market in the region. Encouraged by the positive results which have been achieved, the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign of Foreign Affairs decided recently to turn this Pilot Project into a project to be implemented on a permanent basis, and one more Member States – Ukraine – joined it.

Among the other issues that are being considered within BSEC related to facilitation of the transport of goods, there are:

- the harmonization of weighing procedures;
- the monitoring of the border waiting times, which provides useful actual data to measure the situation and impact of facilitation measures at the borders;
- the harmonization of charging policies in the BSEC Region;
- the facilitation of visa procedures for professional drivers, to the effect of which an Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for Professional Drivers Nationals of the BSEC Member States was opened for signature on 20 May 2008 in Tirana and was signed so far by four Member States;
- the issue of road safety, in the context of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-2020), for which BSEC and UNECE elaborated actions for the BSEC Region.

On 4 March 2015 at the BSEC Headquarters, the Joint Meeting of the BSEC Working Groups on Trade and Economic Development and on Customs Matters with the Participation of Experts on Transport paid proper attention to the **increase of the competitiveness and effectiveness of transport corridors** crossing the territory of the BSEC Member States.

Due consideration was given to the implementation of the TIR-EPD Green Lines on the main road transport corridors in the BSEC Region, fostering implementation of innovative tools like the Single Window in the BSEC Member States.

The BSEC-URTA was invited to prepare a research summarizing the difficulties the haulers encounter at the border-crossing points of the BSEC Member States to be considered by the relevant Working Groups.

A significant element that indicates the great importance our Member States attach to the development of their transport cooperation is the increased frequency of the Meetings of the Ministers of Transport in the last years, laying the ground for **new areas of intensified regional cooperation**.

I will briefly mention the main decisions of the last such Meetings.

In their meeting in Izmir, on 28 November 2012, the Ministers emphasized “the need to promote and develop a coordinated and uninterrupted **intermodal transport and logistics system** within BSEC and outside the region and with its neighboring regions”.

The Ministers continued to show keen interest in developing the intermodal transportation and logistics in BSEC Region, competitive in the global service market, in their decisions taken at Their Meetings in Odessa on 29 May 2013 and in Thessaloniki on 25 November 2014.

Based on these decisions, on 17 April 2015 at the BSEC Headquarters, the Task Force on Cooperation in Intermodal Transportation elaborated on the intermodal transport policy needs, optimal use of the existing infrastructure, advantages of intelligent transport systems and agreed on the relevant actions in that regard.

At their meeting held in Sofia on 16 April 2014, the Ministers focused on **greening transport in the BSEC Region** and adopted a Joint Declaration entitled “Through enhanced BSEC regional co-operation towards a safe and sustainable transport”.

Bearing in mind that green and safe transport in the region plays significant role in triggering economic growth and achieving sustainable development goals, the Ministers agreed *inter alia*, to:

- strengthen their efforts to implement green growth strategies as part of their response to the current economic crisis, acknowledging that “green” and “growth” can go hand-in-hand;
- encourage regional green policy reforms, aimed at avoiding measures that might have negative impacts on the environment;
- elaborate joint priority projects of regional importance for green transport, and consider the possibility of their implementation through existing BSEC mechanisms, Public-Private Partnerships, other funding schemes with the support of the EU and other international organizations and financial institutions, as an effective tool to attract private investment in establishing

greener, more efficient and sustainable transport infrastructure, that will enable, primarily, the use of environmentally friendly modes of transport and give a boost to multimodal transport,

The Meeting of the Ministers in Chişinău, in the Republic of Moldova, on 14 May 2015, adopted a Declaration entitled “Transport facilitation: paving the way to trade and development in the BSEC Region”, expressing the commitment of the Ministers to exert joint efforts for promotion of reliable, efficient, safe, integrated and sustainable transport systems, based on mutually acceptable transport policies of the BSEC Member States and relevant international conventions and treaties, to which BSEC Member States are parties.

Another Ministerial Meeting is being currently organized by the Romanian BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office, to be held in Bucharest in the month of October, and is expected to review the state of implementation of all BSEC transport projects, with focus on promoting the intermodal transport.

These are the main activities that highlight the cooperation in the field of transport in the BSEC framework. A lot has been done and is currently underway in this area for fostering the spirit of transport cooperation in the region.

We believe they are of major significance for the Black Sea Region and, in general, for the Euro-Asian Region.

If it were to point out **shortcomings in the regional cooperation** in the field of transport, one of them consist of the slowness in the implementation of agreed projects and in the processes of identifying projects and cooperation activities of common interest. It is a fact that not all the Member States attach the same importance or priority to the various projects.

Our role as a regional organization is to help harmonizing the views and find solutions that serve the interest of all Member States.

In its endeavours to promote modern infrastructures and effective procedures in this field, BSEC relies on the **cooperation with other international organisations**, in particular, UNECE, IRU, BSEC-URTA (Union of Road Transport Association in the BSEC Region), BASPA (Black and Azov Seas Ports Association), BINSAs (Black Sea International Shipowners Association) and BRASS (Black Sea Region Association of Shipbuilders and Shiprepairers). The BSEC partners continued their active participation in the BSEC transport activities making contribution to the work on gradual liberalization of transport,

visa facilitation, BSEC Permit project, pilot project on introduction of the UNECE International Vehicle Weight Certificate etc.

I use this opportunity to express our deep gratitude for their expertise and the concrete contribution to the development of transport in the BSEC Region.

We see our efforts at the regional level as supplementing the efforts that are being undertaken in the development of Euro-Asian transport links by other international organizations.

It is high time to strengthen our cooperation, aimed especially at ensuring the complementarity of our efforts. There is a lot to be learned and achieved by working together for the benefit of our Member States.