

STATEMENT
by
Ambassador TRAIAN CHEBELEU,
Deputy Secretary General of the
Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS) of the Organization of the
Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)
at the
75TH Session of the Inland Transport Committee
Meeting of Ministers of Transport of countries in the Euro/Asian Region
(Geneva, 26 February 2013)

Madame Chairman,

I am honoured to represent the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organisation at this jubilee session of the Inland Transport Committee and please allow me to brief the distinguished participants about the latest BSEC transport developments, against the background of the cooperation relationship developed over the years between the BSEC Organization and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, based on the Cooperation Agreement between our organizations of 2 July 2001.

Transport is one of the priority areas of cooperation for BSEC. The *BSEC Economic Agenda: Towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership*, a major document for guiding the cooperation in the BSEC framework adopted by the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, in Belgrade on 11 June 2012, and subsequently endorsed by the BSEC Summit, held in Istanbul on 26 June 2012 dedicated to the 20th Anniversary of the BSEC, sets the Establishment of an Efficient Transport Network among the seventeen goals in priority areas of action of the Organization. To attain this goal, it puts 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”.

In their latest meeting in Izmir, on 28 November 2012, the Ministers of Transport of the BSEC Member States acknowledged that “transport plays a vital role in promoting trade, investments and tourism within the BSEC Region”. They 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 confirmed the commitments of the Member States to ensure the progressive implementation of the three major projects and their sub-projects:

- Black Sea Ring Highway;
- Motorways of the Sea in the BSEC Region;
- Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods in the BSEC 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. The MoU on the Coordinated Development of the Black Sea Ring Highway was signed on 19 April 2007 in Belgrade and on 1 November 2008 it entered into force.

A Steering Committee and a Joint Permanent Technical Secretariat of the Black Sea Ring Highway were established in order to implement the project. The Secretariat is managed by the leading public Greek company “Egnatia ODOS S.A.”.

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 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 S.A.”, with financing of the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank and IRU.

▪ **The project Motorways of the Sea in the BSEC region** is aiming at strengthening the maritime links among the ports of the BSEC Member States. Activities within this project include the 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 MoU on the Development of the Motorways of the Sea in the BSEC Region was signed also on 19 April 2007 in Belgrade and entered into force on 1 December 2008.

An Ad Hoc Working Group on the Development of the Motorways of the Sea was established in order to implement the MoU. It worked out and approved the Concept of the MoS Master Plan.

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

Currently, a Joint Technical Secretariat, to be managed by the Turkish Maritime Authorities, is being set up. The decision regarding its functioning is expected to be taken at the forthcoming meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group, to be held on 28-29 March 2013 in Istanbul.

▪ **Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods in the BSEC Region** is directed at an efficient road transport and promoting regional trade and economic growth. A MoU to this effect was signed in Kyiv in 2002, and entered into force on 20 July 2006. The Member States work on several sub-projects in this field.

A pilot project on the Establishment of a BSEC Transit Permit system for the road transit of goods was launched in 2010, with participation of seven BSEC Member States. Encouraged by the positive results which have been achieved, in 2012 the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs took a decision to implement the project on a permanent basis.

An integral part of the cooperation for facilitating road transport is the accession by the BSEC Member States to the UN international agreements on transport. The MoU stipulates that “The Parties shall endeavor to accede, as soon as possible, to the agreements and conventions established under the auspices of the UNECE”. This issue is permanent on the agenda of the BSEC Steering Committee on Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods.

As the introduction of the International Vehicle Weight Certificate under Annex 8 to UN the Harmonization Convention has been facing some obstacles of technical nature, the BSEC joined the UNECE efforts in promoting the Certificate. At its meeting in Istanbul on 15 December 2012, the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs decided to establish a Task Force on introduction of the International Vehicle Weight Certificate in the BSEC Region, which is expected to elaborate a road map to this effect. The first meeting of the Task Force will be held on 11 March 2013 in Istanbul.

Promoting Best Practice at Border Crossings is another area of BSEC action aimed at facilitating legitimate trade and transport across borders of the Member States. The OSCE-UNECE “Handbook of Best Practices at Border Crossings – A Trade and Transport Facilitation Perspective” has become a valuable source for consideration of various aspects of the border crossing facilitation. A joint BSEC-OSCE Workshop will take place in the framework of the next meeting of the Working Group on Customs Matters, on 3-4 April 2013, in Istanbul. The purpose of this joint event is to further raise awareness of the OSCE-UNECE Handbook and utilize it for capacity building, adapted to the needs of the BSEC Region.

These are only some of the most eloquent examples of the action taken in the BSEC framework for promoting the regional cooperation in the field of transport. 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, IRF, as well as business associations. We see our efforts at the regional level as supplementing the efforts that are being undertaken in the development of Euro-Asian transport links under the UN auspices.

In concluding my intervention, I would like to express our gratitude to the UNECE Transport Division and its staff, led by Ms Eva Molnar, for the substantial cooperation extended to us.