



Statement by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic at the 34th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Member States

„Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honour to address this august gathering on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and myself. First of all, I would like to thank our host, H. E. Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, for a brilliant Chairmanship and for the hospitality bestowed on us.

Regional cooperation is one of the cardinal foreign-policy priorities of the Republic of Serbia. In this regard, the Republic of Serbia strives to uphold any initiative aiming to promote dialogue, multilateral economic cooperation and consolidation of good-neighbourly regional relations.

The Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation provides an adequate framework to enhance cooperation and strengthen confidence in the BSEC region, contributing in this way, no doubt, to greater stability, security and overall prosperity. Therefore, our special task is to take stock of the results achieved so far and ensure guidance in the further development and strengthening of our intra-regional cooperation. The record of accomplishments in the past period clearly indicates that BSEC has a potential, but there is also an imperative need for further improving cooperation and implementing specific projects in areas of common interest.

The upcoming marking of the 25th anniversary of BSEC should motivate all actors and inspire fresh thinking and ideas to generate future activities and animate not only partners from the Member States but also all stakeholders, including both observer countries and sectoral dialogue partners. Thus, BSEC will reaffirm its international profile and position on the international stage.

Mr. Chairman,

Today, possibly more than ever since its establishment, the Organization has both an opportunity and a responsibility to, through its engagement, make an impact on the situation in the Black Sea region which has been increasingly gaining relevance at political as well as economic level. In this context, we believe that, as it has the practice until now, the cooperation within BSEC should focus on the areas of common and regional interest - such as economic cooperation, energy, environment protection, trade, infrastructure and transport, health care, education and culture, science and technology, agriculture, and also combating organized crime - the areas which may serve as an incentive to find solutions in the areas where consensus has been lacking.

To be able to meet the present-day challenges, the Organization needs to not only be active and engaged in all these areas, but also functional and economical in its approach in order to enable the Member States to, in the adverse economic conditions, address these challenges in the best possible manner, making their full contribution. In this context, we are committed to optimizing the work of the Organization, where emphasis would not be put on the number of meetings held and documents released, but on concrete projects and solutions.

Mr. Chairman,

Today in Sochi, the Republic of Serbia is to assume its semi-annual Chairmanship-in-Office of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. To Serbia, it is both a privilege and a responsibility to chair the Organization.

During its Chairmanship-in-Office, the Republic of Serbia will endeavour to contribute to the promotion of economic cooperation among the BSEC Member States. A focus will be placed on strengthening cooperation in the areas of trade and tourism, the sectors all of the Member States have recognized as having a considerable potential. The transport sector will be singled out as a special segment of economic cooperation, and a Ministerial Meeting in this framework is planned to take place in Belgrade. The Republic of Serbia will continue the BSEC's good practice of expanding its cooperation with regional and international organizations, as well as with the EU. Increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization will also be a priority of the Serbian Chairmanship, at the same time maintaining the continuity of the policy and goals of the previous Chairmanship countries.

The Republic of Serbia is confident that the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation has a future and a place among our goals, programmes and agendas. In this regard, allow me to highlight again the importance of regional cooperation and readiness of the Republic of Serbia to contribute fully to this process.

Thank you."