



ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Permanent International Secretariat

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REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE BSEC WORKING GROUP ON CUSTOMS MATTERS

(BSEC Headquarters, 26 March 2014)

1. The Meeting of the BSEC Working Group (WG) on Customs Matters was held at the BSEC Headquarters, on 26 March 2014.
2. The Meeting was chaired by Ms. Didem DİRLİK, Head of Department responsible for Multilateral Relations, Ministry of Customs and Trade of the Republic of Turkey.
3. The following Member States of BSEC attended the Meeting:

Republic of Armenia
Republic of Azerbaijan
Republic of Bulgaria
Republic of Moldova
Romania
Russian Federation
Republic of Turkey
Ukraine
4. The following BSEC Sectoral Dialogue Partner also participated in the Meeting:

Union of Road Transport Associations in the BSEC Region (BSEC-URTA)
5. The following Guest attended the Meeting:

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

The List of Participants is attached as **Annex I**.

6. The Agenda of the Meeting was discussed, amended and adopted. The Agenda, as adopted, is attached as **Annex II**.

STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTIONS, DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS RELATED TO CUSTOMS MATTERS AND THE FOLLOW-UP OF THE DECLARATION ADOPTED BY THE MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF ECONOMY OF THE BSEC MEMBER STATES

7. The BSEC PERMIS representative informed on the state of implementation of the Resolutions, Decisions and Recommendations of the 16th BSEC Council (Belgrade, 19 April 2007), 22nd BSEC Council (Sofia, 28 May 2010), 26th BSEC Council (Belgrade, 11 June 2012), 28th BSEC Council (Odessa, 21 June 2013) and the Declaration of the Ministers Participating in the Meeting of the Ministers in Charge of Economy (Yalta, 23 May 2013) related to customs matters.

8. The WG took note of the information provided by BSEC PERMIS and expressed its commitment to take appropriate measures in order to secure proper implementation of the Resolutions, Decisions and Recommendations of the Council and the Declaration of the Ministers.

9. Since the Republic of Turkey will accomplish its duties as the Country-Coordinator of the WG on Customs Matters as of 30 June 2014, the Working Group suggested to the interested Member States willing to assume the role of Country Coordinator of the Working Group on Customs Matters for the next 2 years, to submit to the PERMIS their written intentions by 1 June 2014, so that the issue could be considered by the incoming Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Sofia on 19 June 2014.

THE “WAY FORWARD FOR AN ACTION PLAN ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE “BSEC ECONOMIC AGENDA: TOWARDS AN ENHANCED BSEC PARTNERSHIP”

10. The Working Group exchanged the views on the implementation of the Action Plan on the “BSEC Economic Agenda: Towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership”.

11. The Working Group endorsed the Report on the activities of the Working Group on the implementation of the BSEC Economic Agenda which will be forwarded to the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The Report is attached as **Annex III**.

12. The delegation of the Republic of Turkey informed the WG about the progress in the projects conducted with the Member States, namely Simplified Customs Corridor with the Russian Federation, Joint Use of Border Gates with Georgia, Preliminary Data Exchange with Ukraine, and mentioned that a new Project on Preliminary Data Exchange has been initiated with Azerbaijan. The Republic of Turkey will keep the Working Group informed about its ongoing projects.

13. The Working Group considered the Template of the Project on conducting benchmarking exercises among BSEC Member States and decided to continue the discussion of this project at its next meeting. The Working Group invited the Member States to send their comments and proposals regarding the content of the Template to the BSEC PERMIS until 31 May 2014. The Project Proposal Template is attached as **Annex IV**.

14. The Member States are invited to submit the possible project proposals within the framework of the relevant Template presented by the BSEC PERMIS.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BSEC PUBLIC COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

15. The Working Group considered, amended and approved the Draft Paper for the BSEC web-page on Customs Matters, elaborated by the BSEC PERMIS. The Paper is attached as **Annex V**.

HARMONIZATION AND SIMPLIFICATION OF CUSTOMS PROCEDURES

16. The BSEC PERMIS representative informed that according to the document “The Way Forward on the Implementation of the BSEC Economic Agenda”, out of the 3 priority areas on which the Working Group should focus on in 2013-2015, the following two priorities stipulate to undertake measures towards harmonization and simplification of customs procedures:

- Continuing the on-going process of harmonization of customs and border crossing procedures in conformity with the national legislations, with the aim of facilitating the movement of goods and people across national boundaries.
- Promoting cooperation among the customs authorities of the BSEC Member States in line with the World Customs Organization requirements, including application of innovative technologies in this regard.

17. Furthermore, it was mentioned that in conformity with the priorities set out in the implementation of the Economic Agenda, the Working Group at its previous meeting invited the interested Member States to make their proposals to conduct benchmarking exercises. Also, the Working Group underlined the increasing role of ICT tools in the border crossing procedures that promote trade facilitation, particularly through developing and improving such a mechanism of simplifying border formalities as single window systems.

18. The Working Group underlined the increasing role of the process of harmonization of customs and border-crossing procedures in enhancing trade relations through the elimination of the existing barriers at the border-crossing points.

19. The representative of the UNECE, in his presentation, informed the Working Group on the new situation after the acceptance of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation on 7 December 2013, went through the measures envisaged in the agreement, and presented UNECE Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide. He also underlined the role of the Single Window, including Port Community Systems, as a key instrument for trade facilitation. The presentation of the representative of the UNECE is attached as **Annex VI**.

20. The Working Group took note of the information provided by the representative of UNECE regarding the 4th Seminar on Single Window – local solution, to be held in Odessa on 27 May 2014, during the Odessa Transport Week, and the 4th Regional South Caucasus Trade Facilitation and Single Window Conference, to be held in Tbilisi on 18 September 2014, and welcomed the invitation addressed to BSEC to join these events.

21. The Working Group endorsed the proposal made by the representative of UNECE to organize a joint UNECE-BSEC Seminar, in the autumn of 2014, with the purpose of:

- fostering the creation of Port Community / Single Window systems and similar projects in the countries with Black Sea coasts;
- proposing the creation of a network for inter-organizational trade information exchange in the region (a network of systems).

22. In this regard, the BSEC PERMIS will conduct the necessary consultations with the UNECE Secretariat and make the preparations for adoption of the necessary decisions by the BSEC decision-making bodies.

23. The representative of the BSEC-URTA made a presentation on the activities of the BSEC-URTA relevant for the mandate of the Working Group and, in particular:

- asked for the support of the interested Member States for implementing a new BSEC Pilot Project on the introduction of the UNECE International Vehicle Weight Certificate in the BSEC Region;
- called on the customs administrations of the Republic of Albania, the Republic of Armenia, Georgia and the Hellenic Republic to implement the TIR-EPD (TIR Electronic Pre-Declaration) application, and expressed, on behalf of IRU, the readiness to give its technical support in this regard to the above mentioned customs administrations;
- informed about the successful implementation of the Green Lanes concept at Kapıkule border crossing point of the Republic of Turkey with the Republic of Bulgaria, and expressed its willingness that the Bulgarian Customs Administration will implement soon the concept at Captan Andreevo border crossing point.

24. The WG took note of the movie presentation by the BSEC-URTA about the transport related projects within the BSEC Organization.

25. BSEC PERMIS was instructed to find possibilities for uploading the movie to the BSEC web-site.

CONSIDERATION OF POSSIBILITY TO ESTABLISH A MECHANISM OF EXCHANGE OF PRELIMINARY INFORMATION AMONG THE INTERESTED CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATIONS OF THE BSEC MEMBER STATES

26. The participants exchanged views on ways and means to promote the practice of exchanging preliminary information among the interested customs administrations within the framework of BSEC.

CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSAL OF UKRAINE TO ESTABLISH THE BSEC AD-HOC WORKING GROUP OF EXPERTS FOR STUDYING THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE ON BENCHMARKING OF CUSTOMS PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

27. The Working Group decided to defer consideration of this issue for its next meeting.

REVISION OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE WORKING GROUP

28. The participants agreed that there was no need to revise the Terms of Reference of the Working Group adopted by the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 11 June 2012. The above-mentioned Terms of Reference is attached as **Annex VII**.

HOW TO INCREASE THE EFFICIENCY OF THE WORK OF THE WORKING GROUP? - OBSERVATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

29. The Working Group took note of the information on the issue delivered by the BSEC PERMIS representative and exchanged views on the ways and means of increasing the efficiency of the Working Group.

30. The Working Group emphasized the importance of organizing a meeting of the Heads of Customs Administrations of the BSEC Member States.

31. The BSEC PERMIS was instructed to make relevant preliminary consultations with the incoming Chairmanships-in-Office and the Country-Coordinator of the WG, as well as to elaborate

on the ideas and concrete proposals to be considered at the above-mentioned meeting of the Heads of Customs Administrations.

32. The Member States agreed to provide relevant proposals.

33. The Member States are also invited to check the List of Representatives/Focal Points of the Working Group, attached as **Annex VIII**, and to communicate to the BSEC PERMIS the updated information.

PARTICIPATION OF THE MEMBER STATES IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS ON CUSTOMS MATTERS

34. The WG took note of the consolidated table regarding the “Participation of the Member States in the International Conventions on Customs Matters”, attached as **Annex IX**.

35. The WG invited the BSEC Member States to inform BSEC PERMIS on changes of their status of participation in the International Conventions on Customs Matters.

EVALUATION REPORT OF THE COUNTRY COORDINATOR OF THE WORKING GROUP ON ITS ACTIVITIES DURING THE 4-YEAR PERIOD

36. The Working Group took note of the Evaluation Report submitted by the Country-Coordinator. The Evaluation Report is attached as **Annex X**.

37. The Working Group expressed its appreciation to the Republic of Turkey for the work accomplished as the Country-Coordinator of the Working Group for the last 4 years.

THE NEED FOR COMPARATIVE STATISTICS

38. The participants exchanged views on this issue and agreed that an appropriate body for discussing the issue is the Working Group on Trade and Economic Development.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

39. No issue was raised under this agenda item.

DATE AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

40. The date and venue of the next meeting of the WG will be communicated to the BSEC Member States through BSEC PERMIS.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING

41. The Working Group adopted the present Report for its submission to the Committee of Senior Officials and the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs for their consideration.
