



## ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

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

(BSEC Headquarters, 28 September 2015)

1. The Meeting of the BSEC Working Group (WG) on Customs Matters was held at the BSEC Headquarters, on 28 September 2015.
2. The Meeting was chaired by Mrs. Brândușa PREDESCU, Special Representative of the Romanian Chairmanship-in-Office to BSEC.
3. The following BSEC Member States attended the Meeting:
  - Republic of Albania
  - Republic of Armenia
  - Republic of Azerbaijan
  - Republic of Bulgaria
  - Hellenic Republic
  - 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 List of Participants is attached as Annex I.

### **AGENDA ITEM 1: ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

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

### **AGENDA ITEM 2: STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTIONS, DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS RELATED TO CUSTOMS MATTERS AND FOLLOW-UP OF THE DECLARATIONS ADOPTED BY THE HEADS OF CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATIONS OF THE BSEC MEMBER STATES**

7. The BSEC PERMIS representative informed on the state of implementation of the Resolutions, Decisions and Recommendations of the 16<sup>th</sup> BSEC Council (Belgrade, 19 April 2007), the 32<sup>nd</sup> BSEC Council (Chisinau, 18 June 2015), and the Baku Declaration of the Heads of Customs Administrations of the BSEC Member States “Initiatives of Customs Administrations in Trade Facilitation” (Baku, 26 November 2014).

8. The Working Group took note of the information provided by the 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.

9. The Working Group stressed the importance to follow up the recommendations of the Baku Declaration and the provisions of the Plan of Action of the Working Group on Customs Matters for the period 2014-2016.

10. The delegations of the Republic of Armenia and the Hellenic Republic provided the BSEC PERMIS with updated information on their representatives to the Working Group on Customs Matters. The Working Group invited the BSEC Member States who have not yet appointed their representatives to the Working Group on a long term basis, to do so as soon as possible. The List of Representatives of the Member States to the Working Group, as amended, is attached as Annex III.

11. The Working Group took note of the information that the Working Groups on Trade and Economic Development and on Transport agreed to hold the Joint Meeting of the Working Groups on Trade and Economic Development, on Customs Matters and on Transport, and invited the BSEC PERMIS to have consultations with incoming Chairmanship-in-Office for organizing such a meeting.

### **AGENDA ITEM 3: HARMONIZATION AND SIMPLIFICATION OF CUSTOMS PROCEDURES**

12. The Delegations of Romania and the Republic of Armenia presented information on measures taken at national level for the harmonization and simplification of customs procedures.

13. The Working Group underlined the importance of the Single Window concept as an effective instrument to simplify border formalities by arranging electronic submission of customs declarations and supporting documents in order to fulfil all cross-border regulatory requirements.
14. In this regard, the Working Group emphasized the significant role of eliminating paper from customs procedures and processes wherever possible and replace it with ICT techniques.
15. The representative of the BSEC-URTA provided information on the new developments and barriers in functioning of the TIR system in the BSEC Region.
16. The Working Group underlined the importance of the Member States to join and implement the International Conventions on simplification and harmonization of the customs procedures.
17. The Working Group invited the BSEC Member States to take further appropriate measures towards implementation of the Single Window concept through ICT solutions and provide information on the progress achieved in this area during the next Meeting of the Working Group.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 4: EXCHANGING EXPERIENCE ON METHODOLOGY OF TIME RELEASE STUDY**

18. The Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan, in its capacity as Country-Coordinator of the Working Group, made a presentation informing the participants on the methodology of Time Release Study (TRS) projects accomplished in the Republic of Azerbaijan.
19. The Working Group welcomed and supported the initiative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to organize a Workshop on the methodology TRS and share its experience with the BSEC Member States. The details of the event will be provided in due time.
20. The Delegation of the Hellenic Republic stressed that within the framework of restructuring of the Greek Customs Administration, the TRS has been extensively consulted in cooperation with the WCO. Specific guidelines of the aforementioned Study are taken into consideration, on an ad hoc basis.
21. The Delegation of the Republic of Turkey made a presentation on their national experience on methodology of TRS.
22. The Romanian Delegation provided information on concrete steps of the Customs Administration of Romania in measuring of the time required for releasing goods.
23. The Working Group stressed the significance of use of the WCO TRS Guidelines by the Customs Administrations of the BSEC Member States as an effective tool to measure trade facilitation performance with a view to improving it.

24. In this regard, the Working Group invited the Customs Administrations of the BSEC Member States to undertake TRS projects on measuring their border clearance performance and provide information on the outcomes during the next meeting of the Working Group.

25. The Working Group also invited the BSEC Member States to elaborate and submit to the BSEC PERMIS project proposals, based on the PMU Project Proposal Template, in order to provide joint studies applying the TRS methodology to assess the performance of the import and export clearance processes of each country and take necessary measures for reducing time at border crossing points.

26. The Working Group decided to consider this agenda item during its meetings on a permanent basis.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 5: PROMOTING COOPERATION AMONG THE BSEC MEMBER STATES IN ENHANCING INTEGRITY OF OFFICIALS OF CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATIONS IN THE BSEC REGION**

27. The Republic of Azerbaijan, in its capacity as the Country-Coordinator of the Working Group, provided information on the measures undertaken by the Customs Administration for enhancing integrity of its customs officials.

28. The Working Group underlined that integrity is one of the key issues in the process of trade facilitation and stressed the importance of relevant international documents in the field.

29. The Working Group noted the usefulness of effective instruments in enhancing of Customs integrity such as the Single Window for entry formalities, the participation of the BSEC Member States in international benchmarking initiatives for improvement of border crossing procedures and the application of the Time Release Study, all of which are under consideration of the Working Group.

30. The Delegation of Romania provided information on the measures undertaken by the General Directorate of Integrity of the National Agency for Fiscal Administration (NAFA) in promoting integrity in the exercise of its public duties especially with regard to customs matters. The presentation is attached as **Annex IV.**

31. The Working Group invited the BSEC Member States to share information on their integrity strategies and policies during the next Meeting of the Working Group, with a view to highlight best practices.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 6: PROPOSAL BY THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION REGARDING THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE EXPERT DIALOGUE ON E-COMMERCE**

32. The Working Group expressed its support to the Draft Terms of Reference on the Expert Dialogue on E-commerce, initiated by the Russian Federation, and invited the BSEC Member States to transmit to the BSEC PERMIS their additional views and comments to the text of the Document until 15 November 2015.

**AGENDA ITEM 7: DISCUSSION ON THE MODALITY AND METHODOLOGY USED IN PREPARATION OF THE WORLD BANK’S “DOING BUSINESS” REPORT**

33. The Working Group exchanged views on the World Bank’s “Doing Business” Report and decided to consider this issue during its next meeting and requested the BSEC PERMIS to invite the World Bank representative to attend the meeting.

**AGENDA ITEM 8: CONDUCTING THE BENCHMARKING OF CUSTOMS PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES IN THE BSEC MEMBER STATES**

34. The Working Group discussed the Project Proposal Template on the “Project on Conducting Benchmarking Exercises among the BSEC Member States” and invited the BSEC Member States to submit to the BSEC PERMIS their final comments and views on the document by 15 November 2015.

35. The Working Group requested the BSEC PERMIS to update the Project Proposal based on comments by the BSEC Member States, to elaborate a cost estimate for a pilot project and to circulate it to the Member States for their final approval in order to eventually submit it to the next CSO Meeting. The Template is attached as **Annex V**.

**AGENDA ITEM 9: PARTICIPATION OF THE BSEC MEMBER STATES IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS ON CUSTOMS MATTERS**

36. The Member States were invited to present relevant information with the aim to further update the Table on “Participation of the Member States in the International Conventions on Customs Matters”.

37. The Table, updated as of 28 September 2015, is attached as **Annex VI**.

38. The Republic of Azerbaijan, as Country-Coordinator, proposed in this regard the invitation of experts from the secretariats of the relevant international conventions to future meetings of the Working Group.

**AGENDA ITEM 10: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE “BSEC ECONOMIC AGENDA: TOWARDS AN ENHANCED BSEC PARTNERSHIP”**

38. The Working Group decided to continue to focus on the following three priority areas during the period 2016-2018:

a) 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.

b) Promoting cooperation among the customs authorities of the BSEC Member States in line with the WCO requirements, including application of innovative technologies in this regard.

c) Exchanging, where and when possible, preliminary information on vehicles and goods crossing the borders of the BSEC Member States.

39. The Working Group invited the BSEC Member States to elaborate, based on PMU Project Guidelines, the project proposals within the scope of the priority areas in implementation of the Goals of the BSEC Economic Agenda 2012.

**AGENDA ITEM 11: ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

40. No issue was raised under this agenda item.

**AGENDA ITEM 12: DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

41. The date and venue of the next meeting of the Working Group will be communicated to the BSEC Member States through the BSEC PERMIS.

**AGENDA ITEM 13: ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING**

42. 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.

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